

a group to promote Nordic arts, culture and design. As I recall, she had already chosen “Nordic 5 Arts” as a name. Now, almost thirty years later, and with many past exhibitions and events conceived by Kati and sponsored by our group, we have successfully completed “Water,” a major and prestigious museum exhibition at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Historical Museum in Decorah, Iowa. Kati diligently led our group with enthusiasm and brilliant ideas, serving as Coordinator from 1993 to 1998. She was followed by Pat Bengtson-Jones, 1999-2000, and I was privileged to serve from 2001-2002. Helene Sobol served from 2003-2013, the last years sharing duties with Marc Ellen Hamel as Co-coordinator. I am grateful for the marvelous energy, wonder, and vision of Kati Casida in founding Nordic 5 Arts. She will be greatly missed.

Debra Jewell Kati Casida had a wonderful vision for the formation of Nordic 5 Arts – as a group of artists that could gather and support one another in their individual artistic pursuits in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her creativity and enthusiasm impacted us all through the various activities, group exhibitions, and celebrations in her beautiful home. Particularly memorable occasions that Kati and her husband, John Casida, facilitated were the Snøhetta presentation of the SFMOMA expansion at UC Berkeley and the Santa Lucia festival of lights in her home at Christmastime. Kati had such a rich connection to her own Norwegian heritage and an aesthetic of dance in her sculptural work. She inspired our own deeper connection to the Nordic lands and culture that is our heritage as artists.

Kristin Lindseth Kati was not only a phenomenal artist, but a builder of community through the founding of Nordic 5 Arts and Pacific Rim Sculptors and through her warm hospitality. She was one of the most inspirational people I have known. When she organized the show in Athens, Greece, I was thrilled to have been selected by Peter Seltz to be part of it. Although some of us who were in the show weren't able to fly to Athens, Kati arranged a special tea for us to meet and celebrate. Being a guest in her beautiful home, I enjoyed seeing her art and her husband's collection of artifacts. She was thoughtful and sweet and if I could choose a mentor in life and art, it would be Kati.

Dorothy Kleppen McCall I joined Nordic 5 Arts in the late 1990's after I had received my first grant to attend the University of Oslo summer school to study Scandinavian Art History. When I returned home, I gave Kati a call and she invited me to the next Nordic 5 Arts meeting at her Berkeley home. She was generous and charming and I joined the group. In 2000, Kati asked me to be editor of the Newsbrief and then I really got to know her. She loved to tango with her husband John and they traveled together and tangoed whenever possible. Her large bright metal sculptures often had musical titles. Kati was an elegant and amazing artist and I learned so much from her. Her legacy will endure at Nordic 5 Arts which continues to thrive as does her colorful art.

Diane Rusnak In the 1970's and 80's I saw Kati across the crowded rooms at many Greek dances. She was always surrounded by friends and I wasn't bold enough to talk with her although I followed her artwork in art publications and mentioned it in my pioneering Women Art History classes in colleges and adult schools. One night my Greek boyfriend and I went to the Richmond Art Center where Kati was having a show and discovered a Greek band playing and many people doing line dances, a night I'll always remember. In 2004, I joined Nordic 5 and experienced Kati's enthusiastic organizing ability and saw that we all benefited from her connections with the wider art world. Our meetings in her stunning museum-like home were also memorable.

Helene Sobol From the moment I met Kati in the 1990's, she impressed me not only as an accomplished sculptor, but also as an artist with a vision. As the founder of Nordic 5 Arts in 1993, she had been determined to put Nordic 5 Arts on the map as a serious group of artists whose work deserved to be exhibited in prominent venues. Since then, our group has presented a number of major exhibitions, many of which were conceived and organized by Kati. I came to learn that the force of her personality was hard to resist when she convinced me to take over the leadership duties as Coordinator of Nordic 5 Arts in 2003, a function I held for ten years, with Marc Ellen Hamel as my Co-coordinator during the last years of my tenure. I had the occasion to work with her closely when she commissioned me to edit and design the exhibition catalog for “Magic Carpet Ride,” an exhibition of sculpture in Athens, Greece. There were many challenges in bringing the show to fruition, but I observed her formidable organizational skills first hand as she worked across the world to bring sculpture from the Bay Area to be shown together with Greek sculptors whom she had met over the years during her many visits to Greece. Kati was a fine artist in her own right and, as the founder of Nordic 5 Arts, has left an important legacy that will endure.

Barbara Stevens Strauss Kati has had a significant influence on my life since I moved to the Bay Area. She founded Nordic 5 Arts and was one of the co-founders of Pacific Rim Sculptors, two organizations that have contributed greatly to validate my work as art - a hurdle for me working in non-functional clay. With her husband John, she hosted many memorable meetings and parties in their art-filled Berkeley home. Her brilliant idea to invite Craig Dykers, founding partner of Snøhetta, to give a presentation at UC Berkeley regarding the major expansion project then in progress at SFMOMA, was one of the best I've ever attended in my life! The celebration of Kati's life in her art-filled home, made me appreciate what a gateway it was into her artistry. It also reminded me of her incomparable talent as a host and formidable organizer. I owe her much and shall miss her.

artists at work during COVID-19

Colette Crutcher My Covid year was a productive time. In 2020, I received a number of small private commissions and two major mosaic stairway commissions, including one created in collaboration with Aileen Barr for the city of Vallejo, CA, and a tiled stairway for Recology at their San Francisco refuse and recycling facility, which will feature handmade tiles with ceramic impressions of discarded masks and latex gloves as a 2020 fossil. I also continued my series of small ceramic wall pieces that represent windows with little glimpses into people's lives.

Ellen Faris Virus, lockdowns, social distancing, masks, and fear... not a great recipe for creativity! To keep a positive attitude, I did projects around the house painting fences and garden furniture. I also worked on two projects: transforming a "Jack Rabbit" sculpture into a female firefighter to benefit the Vacaville Museum and creating a new artwork that incorporates parts of a 300 year old Valley Oak tree that had been toppled in a storm, sponsored by the Bedford Gallery to benefit the City of Walnut Creek.

Pam Fingado By playing in the studio during the lockdown, I developed a new way of working that turned out to be a very creative and fun project. Early in 2020, I started drawing small 2"x2" squares in my sketchbook. I then chose the squares I liked, cut them out and reassembled them by color on to an 11"x14" Bristol board. 24"x24" became the final size and included 144 small 2"x2" squares. I describe the process in my new book "Small Squares - Big Ideas, Thirty Fun Ways to Learn Abstract Design through Collage, Drawing and Color." Available on Amazon.

Marc Ellen Hamel is happy to report that she was accepted in many online and real-life exhibitions in 2020 and early 2021, including "Pieced Together: 4 Shipyard Collage Artists"; Think Round Gallery, San Francisco. (15 artworks); "Collage & Mixed Media," a Bay Area Artists Juried Exhibition at the San Francisco Women Artists Gallery; "Textural: Artwork with Text" at Live Worms Gallery, San Francisco ("Alphabet City" shown here); "The Table Setting," Part of Northern California Women's Caucus for Arts' annual member exhibition, "Composing the Future," May-June 2021, at the Bankhead Theater, in Livermore, CA.

Maj-Britt Hilstrom It was very strange being thrown suddenly into a bizarre solitary confinement, though it was not completely "solitary" since my grandson, a grad student, shared my home. As an artist, I did not want, or perhaps felt unable to, undertake any new large and ponderous work, so, instead, I started experimenting with dry point, an old printing technique inscribing into copper. Working in my imperfect garden was consoling and, drawing inspiration from nature, I started painting watercolors of my flowers and plants on 12" x 16" paper. "Peonies" is a watercolor I painted of flowers I received on Mother's Day.

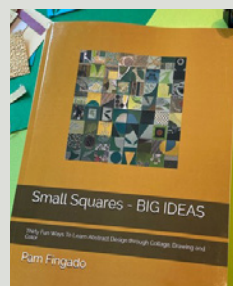
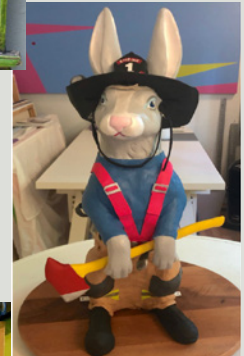
Ulla de Larios Just before Covid hit us, I had taken a workshop in an old Indian technique called "Split-ply Twining," a unique way to make goat hair girths to secure the saddle on camels in the deserts of Northern India. In 2020, I found that my concentration was on larger pieces and I started the piece (shown here) by dyeing about 15 lbs of wool, then making four-ply ropes from that wool. For the second piece in this technique, I needed 360 ropes about 12 feet long. Using a converted knitting needle, the plies of the rope were separated two by two and another rope inserted. Repeat that action by 100,000 and the piece was finished.

Pernilla Persson In the spring of 2020 I explored monoprint, using a simplified process. I loved that it took me out on walks in fresh air in search of leaves, flowers, and other materials. It made me think about colors, paint, and texture in a new way. In the fall, I went car camping for six weeks, a fertile period in which I produced significant new work. I went south on Highway I making frequent stops to photograph and enjoy the beauty all around me. This happened right before California closed down fully. It was an adventure that propelled me toward a better and more creative space in 2021.



Colette Crutcher
Inside Out
Ceramic Tile

Ellen Faris
Butsin
Female Firefighter
Sculpture



Pam Fingado
Small Squares -
Big Ideas
Book

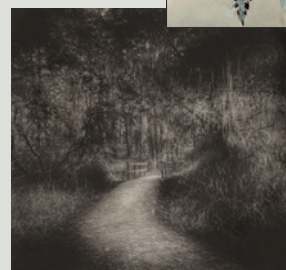
Marc Ellen Hamel
Alphabet City
Monotype Collage



Ulla de Larios
Gisela's Wool #5
Textile



Maj-Britt
Hilstrom
Peonies
Watercolor



Pernilla Persson
Quiet Thoughts
Photograph

Joan Stuart Ross At the start of the pandemic lockdown, I was stressed out with anger and grief. I had been drawing and collaging on my husband's crossword papers and began to augment those ideas with images of my vision of the convoluted culture we are living in by making larger works. I filled 2020 with drawing, painting, reading, breathing, and calming down. "Wrack My Mind" (2020, acrylic, collage, pastel on rag paper, 22 1/4"x30") is an example of my work from this time. I had many exhibitions in 2020 and 2021, including "Global Warming Is Real," Museum of Encaustic Art, Santa Fe, NM; "Viral Collaborations," Bridgeport Art Center, Chicago, IL; "Overseas," Recklinghausen, Germany, Group Exhibition; 14th International Encaustic Conference, Provincetown, MA.

Diane Rusnak This past year I picked up my old Prismacolor pencils whose gorgeous colors and buttery touch led me to create two types of drawings: Realistic Flowers and Dream Drawing Journals. The flowers were relatively easy to do, the latter much harder to invent and develop. But I learned much more from the squares and now have a group of 38 panels. A constant, steady thread in my life for fifty years has been the keeping of a Day Journal (67 volumes now) consisting of 13,000 hand written pages and Dream Journals consisting of 1,300 typed pages (over 5,000 night dreams). The journals are often source material for artworks, large and small, and of varied media. My writing also acts as my memory, a stable core in my life, a learning and growing source, as well as a witness to the times such as recording the powerful feminist art movement of the 1970's and 80's in the Bay Area. I found these past 14 months to be emotionally hard as an 82-year-old single woman living alone who loves to see people. So, I am glad we are now reconnecting and recovering! My participation in the "Water" show at the Vesterheim Museum in Iowa gave me a deep sense of satisfaction.

Helene Sobol I was visiting my family in Norway when Covid-19 struck. Fortunately, I was able to change my return ticket and come home after just a few days there. During most of 2020, I kept busy with a variety of projects: I provided information and old photos for an article about the life and career of my father published in the 2020 yearbook of Sola Historical Society (in Norwegian waiting to be translated into English.) I also received a commission to edit and design a legacy book. To lift my spirits, I went on daily walks - wearing a mask even outside - in Golden Gate Park where I focused my zoom lens on plants and animals. Many of those photographs were published in the monthly newsletters of SFNature.org. "San Francisco Lockdown 2020" symbolizes the City's prolonged lockdown and "sheltering in place." The fence and two locks, partially blocking the south tower of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, can be seen as a metaphor for the sense of separation and isolation felt during the pandemic.

Barbara Stevens Strauss The effects of the pandemic for me were varied. Sadly, my job as preschool art teacher came to an end, but the upside was that I became free to devote more time to working on my art. I took a Zoom class with a Japanese potter in Seto City, Japan, and Soho Sakai, my ikebana teacher of many years, moved her SF City College class to an online format, also making it possible to access her skills during the pandemic. Although I still do some ceramic sculpture, I began to put all my efforts into paper collage (chigiri e.) and "Hanalei Bay" was exhibited in November 2020 in Sakai, Japan (near Osaka) as part of an International Art Bridge Exchange between Berkeley and Sakai artists. My raku sculpture "Diva" was selected for "Beauty or Truth" at Art Works Downtown Gallery in San Rafael.

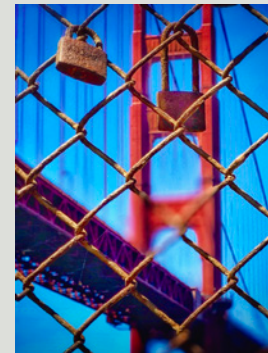
Helena Tiainen The pandemic and violence in the world have been depressing during this past year. Although my creativity has been active and I have made quite a bit of art, my art business has suffered. I have found it hard and frustrating to stay motivated to promote and market my art, but I have not given up making art because I simply have to create for my own sanity's sake! I participated in a number of exhibitions: "Art in Isolation" at North Dakota Museum of Art; "Art for World Peace" at Be One Gallery, Singapore; "Cosmic Peace," an online and pop-up exhibition at Joy Luck 65, Singapore. I received numerous awards in two Facebook art groups Abstract Designers and Abstract Expressions. My painting, "The Joy of Design LIII," will be included in "Fun Size," a book of artworks sized 6 by 6 inches or smaller, to be published by Jen Tough Gallery in Summer 2021.



Joan Stuart Ross *Wrack My Mind, Collage*



Diane Rusnak
Covid Virus Enters This Precious Life, Pencils



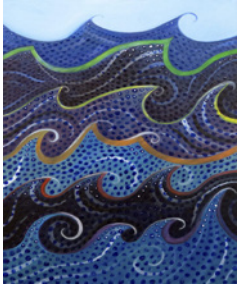
Helene Sobol
San Francisco Lockdown 2020, Photograph



Barbara Stevens Strauss
Hanalei Bay, Paper Collage



Helena Tiainen
The Joy of Design LIII, Painting

**Helena Tiainen** *Waves and Swirls, Acrylic on Canvas, 2020*

This painting pays homage to the ongoing and never-ending flow of energy. The blue dots are symbolic of the drops of water that make the mighty ocean. There is strength in numbers and everything great in this world is made from the united small and microscopic.

Fall in Violet, Oil on Panel, 2016 **Jenny Wantuch**

My painting titled "Fall in Violet" was created from my trip to Northern Sweden (Jämtland) in the early autumn. I was interested in expressing the contrast between warm and cool colors and the abstract reflections. I work from life and direct observation. I use my plein air paintings, painted outdoors on site, as reference for larger studio paintings. I chose the natural landscape as a vehicle for healing and hope. I am interested in the non-verbal visual poetry and mystery that a landscape in autumn evokes, and it is a theme that I frequently revisit.

**Tracey Benson** *After the Fires, Film, 2020*

"After the Fires" is a video installation about The Murrumbidgee River – the flow after the catastrophic fires in the summers of 2019-2020. The audio work is a spontaneous composition by sound artist and healer Dian Booth, recorded at SCANZ CBR in 2017. Video footage and editing by Tracey M. Benson, filmed at Uriarra Crossing in January 2020 and Ginninderry March 2020 after the rain. This work builds on the ongoing project "Words for Water" initiated in 2013. "After the Fires" explores the relationship of the river focusing on how it connects people and places, offering a meditation on the importance of respecting the life of the river. The Murrumbidgee connects Canberra to the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia. It is the third largest inland river.

**Pernilla Persson, New Co-coordinator** by Marc Ellen Hamel

We are pleased that Pernilla Person has agreed to serve as our new Co-coordinator, sharing duties with Barbara Stevens Strauss. Former Co-coordinator, Ulla de Larios, has taken on the position of Treasurer. Pernilla was born in Sweden and has lived in the Bay Area for many years. She is primarily a photographer and we asked her to share a bit about how she was led to photography as her main medium. "My interest in photography came at an early age. My favorite photographs that I took as a child remind me of my work today, though back then, they were happy accidents. Today I have much better control over my camera and can capture the painterly feeling that I love so much, as well as bright colors combined with shapes and movement. During the years, I have explored drawing, watercolor, and sculpture. Still, photography is the medium I keep coming back to." Pernilla explained why she enjoys being a part of our group and why she agreed to serve as a co-coordinator. "After a few years living in the Bay Area, I started to long for my roots and Scandinavian culture. I searched the internet and happily found Nordic 5 Arts. I love the community of artists getting together at meetings, sharing food, art, and art experiences. I want to keep building and growing our community in the Bay Area and beyond. This is what motivated me to accept the position of Co-coordinator for Nordic 5 Arts."

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 an upcoming meeting 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 Pernilla Persson

Exhibitions Committee: Ellen Faris and Jenny Wantuch **Secretary:** Colette Crutcher **Treasurer:** Ulla de Larios

Newsbrief Committee: Marc Ellen Hamel, Editor; Helene Sobol, Associate Editor

Website Coordinator and Newsbrief Design: Helene Sobol

The nordic 5 arts NEWSBRIEF is published once a year.

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