

Belmont Art Association Meeting: March 24, 2021

Location: Our eighth Zoom meeting was brought to order by Co-Chairs Naomi Ellenberg-Dukas and Dari Paquette at 7:00. There were eight attendees:

Attendees: Nicole Bernstein, Naomi Ellenberg-Dukas (Co-Chair), Irene Fairley, Bert Halstead (Treasurer and Membership Coordinator), Kirstin Ilse, Susan Kottler, Dari Paquette (Co-Chair), and Jane Wentzell (Recording Secretary).

Meeting

Dari began the business meeting with six items on the agenda.

- 1. Transformer Boxes:** Dari and Naomi have a scheduled meeting on Monday, March 29th, with Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall to discuss the potential locations of this year's boxes. Dari has prepared for this meeting by photographing numerous boxes and making them into a document. Also, Dari participated in a Belmont Media Center "News Now" interview with Belmont Cultural Council representatives discussing the BCC award to the BAA. You can watch it at <https://www.belmontmedia.org/watch/news-now-belmont-cultural-council-grants-030321>.
- 2. Paint Pals Update:** Fleur Thesmar, who teaches watercolor classes, offered to assist Ian Todreas with his initiative to help isolated elders learn to paint at home. Fleur approached "Belmont Helps" to get them involved, but there was no available funding to support supplies or a Zoom account. Dari contacted Anne Mahon, a local realtor with a history of supporting Belmont artists who is on the Housing Authority Board, to see if she might know of a local business that might be interested in donating \$300 to cover supplies and a Zoom account for teaching. Anne promptly volunteered to donate, expressing interest in getting Sherman Gardens residents involved in the project. Of the donation, \$150 will go toward paying for a year of Zoom so that watercolor instruction can be done virtually. The rest of Anne's donation will go toward supplies. We greatly appreciate Anne's generosity!
- 3. April Meeting Presentation:** Next month's demo at our meeting will be a virtual visit to Indigo Fire, a pottery studio on Concord Avenue in Belmont. Ned Levering, the owner and creative force of Indigo Fire, is a member of the BAA. He will show us around the studio, do a short demo, and discuss Indigo Fire's expansion to a second location.
- 4. Dues:** Our annual dues of \$35 were due in January. Bert Halstead, our Treasurer and Membership Coordinator, reported that he has received several checks and PayPal payments. If any member is in financial difficulty due to Covid or otherwise, communicate with Bert and he will discretely continue the membership. We don't want to lose members due to financial difficulties.
- 5. BGA Virtual Spring Show:** The opening reception for "Art Heals: Transforming Ourselves and Our World" will be April 9th from 7-8:30 pm. Guest juror Elaine Hawkes is an art therapist who will make a presentation during the reception. Visit www.virtualbga.org for further details.
- 6. Summer Break:** The BAA will take a summer break as usual this year, with no Members Meetings in July and August. There will be meetings through June. We will be scheduling a meeting in September.

Presentation:

Naomi gave Kirstin Ilse the Zoom hosting capability so she could discuss her work. Kirstin is a BAA member and active professional artist who paints on silk using alcohol-based dyes with various resists, resulting in finished work that she humorously described as "watercolor on acid." She graciously spoke about three stages in her work process.

First, she showed us how she paints the silk. We viewed her interesting setup with the camera looking down at her work table. Using claw hooks at the corners, she attaches a long Habutai silk scarf to a frame wrapped with masking tape. She then paints a design with a resist, which could be rubber or gutta percha, using squeeze tube pens with various nibs loaded with dyed resist. Her preferred product is Resistad, which has no noxious fumes and does not alter the hand of the silk, and which can be dyed to her preferred color. The dye color in the resist stays on the silk after the resist is removed. After the resist is dried and heat set, Kirstin paints dye around the resist lines. She loads paint brushes softened with water with different colors of dye diluted with rubbing alcohol, and then watches the silk threads drawing the dye out. The dye runs faster with alcohol. She blots small areas with Q-Tips. Because she is painting with dyes, she doesn't have to clean her brushes, simply leaves them to dry between uses. She blots with three layers of unprinted newsprint and protects any uncompleted work with plastic.

Second, Kirstin showed us how she processes the silk after it is dry. The silk has to be steamed to fix the dye and to remove the resist. She makes a bundle of a dozen squares of dyed silk wrapped in several layers of unprinted newsprint and puts the bundle into a paper bag and then aluminum foil. This goes into a large stockpot atop an upside down steamer, and then she wraps the entire pot with ten thicknesses of aluminum foil with a cardboard chimney in the middle to control the heat and humidity of the steam bath. She uses several thermometers to check the temperature during the process. She then steams for three hours with the exhaust fan running. It is important to keep the room well ventilated as it is not good to breathe the steam from the dye. Kirstin also showed us her giant bullet steamer, which is 6 ½ feet tall and cloaked in shiny furnace insulation. She uses this for steaming bigger pieces. Steaming fixes the dyes without the need for formaldehyde.

Third, Kirstin demonstrated how she makes collages after giving some background information. A drop of water accidentally introduced during the steaming process can ruin a piece. She uses these for collages rather than wasting the materials. She loves holograms and uses holographic papers for her collages. She uses Cricut vinyl, which she described as "contact paper on steroids." These she purchases at JoAnne's Fabrics. She uses Liquitex acrylic medium as her preferred glue, and uses interference hues on top. Alternatively Liquitex varnish can be used instead of glue, which doesn't crackle. She prefers Liquitex to Golden. Kirstin cuts the Cricut paper into tree shapes freehand with Ghinger scissors. She will someday try duplicating the hand cut designs on a computer program at the Hatch Makerspace, a workshop space stocked with tools, materials and expertise, which is free to use and open to everyone in the community thanks to the Watertown Free Public Library, and is located at 20 Summer Street in the Residence at Watertown Square.

To create a collage, Kirstin places her Cricut shapes on 5x5" birch box frames. Over these she places a layer of dyed silk with Liquitex acrylic medium as glue. She applies multiple layers of silk and Cricut shapes, uses the backing of the shapes as a stencil to create more trees in interference hues, drawing in parts with ink, and then covers them with Liquitex top coat varnish to give a depth effect similar to Japanese lacquer. They look different depending on the light source direction due to the holographic papers. Three of her lovely recent collages are in the BGA's current "Art Heals" show. These amazing little gems are available for purchase at virtualbga.org. Still pictures of the process are also on her Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/kirstinilse/>

Recording Secretary: Jane Wentzell, 617- 489 - 0412
Edits and additional notes by Dari Paquette and Kirstin Ilse