

## **Belmont Art Association Meeting: April 22, 2021**

**Location:** Our ninth Zoom meeting was brought to order at 7:05 pm with twelve people attending:

**Attendees:** Naomi Ellenberg-Dukas (Co-Chair), Ellen Fischer (Newton Open Studios Director), Bert Halstead (Treasurer and Membership Coordinator), Louise Halstead, Kirstin Ilse, Ned Levering (owner of Indigo Fire Pottery Studios), Sally Naish, Deb Page, Dari Paquette (Co-Chair), Rebecca Richards (Co-Director of BGA), Linda Salter, and Jane Wentzell (Recording Secretary).

### **Meeting**

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

- 1. Dues:** Bert Halstead, our Treasurer and Membership Coordinator, began the business meeting with a membership report. "Most of the people on this call have sent in their \$35 dues," he said. "Dues are how we pay for web expenses and mail distribution." If any member is in financial difficulty due to Covid or otherwise, communicate confidentially with Bert, and he will discretely renew their membership.
- 2. Meeting Presentation Topics:** Naomi and Dari are looking for program ideas for our June meeting and beyond. If you have been doing any type of art challenge and would like to talk about it, let them know. Please communicate any other suggestions for presentations if you have them.
- 3. Transformer Boxes:** Dari and Naomi met with Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall on Monday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, to determine the location of acceptable transformer boxes to be considered for painting this year. Dari prepared for this meeting by photographing numerous boxes and making them into a document. Naomi and Dari are in communication with the Belmont Cultural Council to try to get the grant changed from three to four boxes, because the Council has greatly increased their grant from last year. When this is decided, the Call for Entries will go out for designing and painting a box.
- 4. Public Art Project with BGA:** Rebecca Richards, Co-Director of the Belmont Gallery of Art, spoke about their next show, which involves a corresponding public art project funded by the Belmont Cultural Council. Sixty to eighty unpainted birdhouses will be distributed for people to design and paint. The BGA and assistants will then hang them in locations around town. In conjunction with this public art project, there will be a bird-themed virtual art show called, "Hope Is The Thing With Feathers," the title of a poem by Emily Dickenson. The deadline to submit work to this show is May 8<sup>th</sup>. The show opens May 17<sup>th</sup> and will be up most of the summer. The opening of the BGA's physical space in the Homer building is tentatively scheduled for the fall, with a final decision to be made by the Belmont Board of Health. Rebecca said that the BGA will not give up their virtual gallery after the physical space becomes available because it is very popular.
- 5. Newton Open Studios Outdoor Event:** Linda Salter introduced Ellen Fisher, the director of Newton Open Studios for the past 20 years. This group organizes annual events that bring together the artists and residents of Newton. Newton Open Studios is one of the longest running open studios in the region, and participation is open to anyone who lives, works, or belongs to an organization in Newton. This year to be Covid-safe they are planning a one-day, outdoor, decentralized event with about 40 locations, with 3-4 groups spread out at each location. Membership in the Newton Art Association is required. The fee to participate is \$85, as opposed to the usual cost of \$150. The fee covers advertising in Newton: 20 sandwich boards, signage, arrows, downloadable signage, balloons. To learn more, visit [newtonopenstudios.org](http://newtonopenstudios.org)
- 6. Featured Presentation:** Naomi introduced Ned Levering, the owner and guiding light of the Indigo Fire Pottery Studio at 60 Concord Avenue in Belmont. This was a delightful visit with our masked member, Ned, in his element. Ned introduced us to the history of Indigo Fire and told us his personal history with making pottery. Then he gave a virtual tour of the studio, showing the

equipment and products necessary to teach students how to make pottery. These included a hand-made scale to weigh clay, a clay recycling station, and clay traps under the sinks. Each student gets an allotment of clay for their class, and Ned and his students use 50-100 pounds of clay per day. Ned said that most of his students prefer the throwing wheels. We were not able to see these because there was a class in session.

The studio is not one large room, but is divided by Ned's handmade wooden shelves into smaller spaces. In one of the rooms, Ned showed us a wall covered with glaze samples, and below that were covered tubs of glaze. He said they use the science of glaze chemistry to make their own glazes.

Ned showed his three electric kilns. All pots are fired twice at 2200° F. We were able to look inside one of the kilns, which was packed tightly with many cups, but they were not touching one another.

Ned showed us some of his own work. His favorite imagery comes from bogs: fiddleheads, cattails, and the great blue heron. He also demonstrated how to pull and attach a handle to a leather-hard clay mug, which was fun and interesting to watch. Leather-hard refers to the stage of clay drying where the pot can be handled without deforming it, but the clay is still visibly damp.

The drying process is very important in ceramics; if not done properly, the objects can crack.

Ned was questioned about his company's expansion into a 4000 square foot warehouse space at 79 Grove Street in Watertown. The Atrium School is across the street. He said he is outgrowing his Belmont location because there is such high demand in the Boston area that his classes are full, with students on a waiting list.

The BAA offers sincere thanks to Ned for giving us an enlightening and charming tour of Indigo Fire's Belmont studio! We look forward to seeing the new location when it opens.

7. **May Presentation:** Our May meeting will feature a demonstration of painting on polymer clay, a very complex process, by artist Linda Leach.
8. **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.

Recording Secretary: Jane Wentzell, 617- 489 - 0412

Edits and additional notes by Dari Paquette