

The logo consists of three stylized triangles: a red one on the left, a green one in the middle, and a blue one on the right, all pointing downwards.

Wisconsin Visual Artists

M A G A Z I N E

2nd Quarter Issue - June, July, August 2020

A large, iridescent bubble is the central focus of the cover. It has a rainbow-like sheen with colors ranging from purple and blue at the top to green and yellow at the bottom. Inside the bubble, a small, rectangular piece of torn, aged paper is pasted. The paper has a rough, deckled edge and contains the text 'The Future' written in a black, serif font.

The Future



ADVERTISE

Contact Ally Wilber at:

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CONTACT

General inquiries may be made to:

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This publication is edited and designed by WVA member Aaron Wilbers:

wvadesigner@gmail.com

GET INFO TO US

Members and venues may post events, exhibits and opportunities on our site.

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Please post info 2+ weeks prior to issue date; example, May 14 for June/July/Aug. issue

NOTE: The views, information, and opinions expressed in this magazine are solely those of the individuals being interviewed and do not necessarily represent those of the Wisconsin Visual Artists organization. The primary purpose of this publication is to educate and inform.

ON THE COVER: *The Corona Chronicles .8*, (re-cropped) by Thomas Ferrella. See story on page 6.

Stories

Hello Artists,

For the past month I've been working at the Museum of Wisconsin Art sparingly, in an isolated way, organizing archives while wearing a mask. I've found many publications by the Wisconsin Painters and Sculptors (WVA, prior) dating back to the 1920's. I was even fortunate enough to stumble across the very first minutes of our mother-organization, the Society of Milwaukee Artists, from the year 1900. We have always been a prolific organization, and I'm proud to be a part of something so storied. Our stories are relevant. The fact that I am sifting through, reading, and archiving stories of Wisconsin artists from 1920 in 2020 speaks to that.

That's why I would like to hear yours! I invite all WVA members who are interested in sharing their experiences as an artist to send letters and articles to me, to be shared in our newsletters. Perhaps tell the story of how your career has grown. Explain it as if to a young artist, just starting out. What would you have to teach them? Perhaps talk about the challenges of working through a global pandemic. How has our current situation impacted your life, your career, or your work? All of our stories are poignant, and I hope that they will be read and shared for many years to come, through WVA's archives.

I'm excited for you to read the interviews in this month's magazine, focused on members who are making an effort to improve our current situation - a global crisis - by going out of their way to create accessible positivity, support, and beauty for those of us who so desperately need it.

I hope you feel how capable and essential you are to this world as an artist.

Best,

Ally Wilber
Executive Director, WVA

CHAPTER NEWS

STATEWIDE

The State Board met via its first online meeting on May 21, 2020. The meeting went smoothly despite being a new method of interacting. WVA Executive Director Ally Wilber suggested that the board plan to meet for shorter, monthly meetings to more evenly distribute the task load of each meeting. The board plans to implement this new approach, having their next meeting on June 25.

NORTH-EAST CHAPTER JANE HOSTETLER, CHAIR

As our monthly chapter meetings are on hold, please know that we would like to schedule some virtual meetings in July and August. For

those who have not participated in a virtual meeting before, we will provide short but comprehensive instructions on how to be a part of a virtual event. Stay well, have a great summer and keep creating! Looking forward to seeing, sharing, enjoying all our creative outcomes soon!

SC CHAPTER - JAYNE REID JACKSON, CHAPTER CHAIR

At this point I am cancelling our May and June meetings and plan on beginning again this fall with our August picnic meeting. If conditions surrounding Covid-19 improve or change before then, I will let our members know via email. Stay well and stay safe!

SOUTH-EAST CHAPTER MARIA HERO, CHAIR

SE Chapter meeting details TBA, please watch for email. Thank you

WVA MEMBER CATALOG UPDATED FOR 2020

The newly updated 2020 Wisconsin Visual Artists Members Catalog is now available for download on the WVA website.

Find it under the top menu of "Members" and then under "Publications".



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In Solidarity with Black Lives Matter | Jenie Gao, WVA President

12 weeks after most states announced their Safer At Home Orders, many things have come to a head.

COVID-19 has claimed 120,000 lives in the US, predominantly impacting the black community. 20% of American citizens have filed for unemployment while America's billionaires got 20% richer, accumulating \$565 billion more in wealth in the last few months. White violence has exemplified itself in multiple ways, from Amy Cooper weaponizing her whiteness against Christian Cooper to Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck before an audience in broad daylight. All of these events, culminating in the murder of George Floyd, launched the largest civil rights movement in world history. 50 states and at least 20 nations participated in the Black Lives Matter protests during the first week of June.

The challenge for all of us now is to commit to real change. Racial disparities, economic inequality, weak infrastructure to support public health and wellbeing, and an ill-prepared system for a crisis were all realities before the pandemic. It is not a matter of whether each of us is individually a decent person. All of us operate as a part of a colonial society, and oppression and racism are written into the rules of the game. So what does that mean for those of us in the arts? How can we be better allies, to Black Lives Matter, and the cause for equity and justice?

As artists and arts professionals, we need to be critical of the ways in which our work can help or hurt the causes of diversity and equity. Currently, the arts require a high level of volunteerism, one of the highest barriers of access for who gets to participate in the field. Volunteering is a privilege, and as long as the arts industry relies heavily on the volunteer work of artists, the biggest voices in the field will be wealthy and white. Additionally, we must educate ourselves about cultural appropriation, and the ways in which white artists have indirectly and directly borrowed and profited from the cultures of people of color. When interacting with cultural motifs in another artist's work or our own, we must get better at asking, who benefits from this?

The arts industry is deeply intertwined with the nonprofit sector, and we must evaluate the ways in which nonprofits are complicit with an oppressive system. Nonprofits are designed as societal tax breaks and as a way to outsource the labor of charity. This can render social inequity invisible to the most privileged people and makes it harder to tackle the roots of social issues. We cannot change entire systems overnight, but we can become better at recognizing the systems that dictate our behavior and create barriers. We can dismantle problematic policies and infrastructure and build with the goals of equity.

Finally, we must resist the urge to use art as a bandage for a deep wound. With the riots and looting, it may be tempting for many artists to create their own Black Lives Matter-inspired designs, to insert themselves even in well-intentioned ways into a narrative that should really be led by black voices. It may be tempting to cover boarded up storefronts with positive messages and create other temporary homages to the moment. This isn't to say we cannot have positive, visual messages in the aftermath of the protests. But we do need to ask what our motives are. If it takes less than 48 hours for an affluent business district to board up its store windows and find artists to paint positive murals on them, how many communities of color have lived with real blight for generations before their pain finally reached us? If we cannot live with their discomfort for more than a few days, then are we okay with going back to business-as-usual after this?

"The challenge for all of us now is to commit to real change".

"The work we are willing to do today will shape who we become for generations".

We are now in a pandemic turned recession turned revolution, and we in the arts work in an industry that defines cultural representation and thought. We cannot look away from this moment. Black Lives Matter. We must commit to educating ourselves, listening, and creating space for black voices, now and beyond the movement. The work we are willing to do today will shape who we become for generations.

ART HEALS

An interview with Frank Juarez | Ally Wilber, WVA Executive Director

Can you give a bit of background on Artdose Magazine and FRANK & COMPANY?

Artdose Magazine is a bi-annual independent Wisconsin art magazine committed to connect and support the Visual Arts. The first issue was published by Frank Juarez in 2013 focusing on the Sheboygan art community. The magazine consists of articles featuring artists, curators, and emerging exhibition spaces. In addition, art venue listings and an artist directory.

Today, it continues to expand its outreach beyond NorthEast and SouthEast Wisconsin. In April of 2019 it implemented a social club gathering initiative, and most recently developed more programming such as The Art Heals Movement, Artdose Talks, and See & Discover.

FRANK & COMPANY is a weekly art e-newsletter focused on connecting and promoting visual art content from galleries, arts centers, institutions, non-profit arts organizations, and artists. It is offered via an online subscription, which is free. Since 2019, it has gained the attention of artists from across the globe, which are highlighted in its weekly featured artist section of the e-newsletter. FRANK & COMPANY is part of Artdose Magazine.



Tell us about the Art Heals Movement. What is its purpose? What has it included?

The Art Heals Movement started in mid-March when this pandemic was starting to take center stage in Wisconsin. The purpose is to open a channel of support and stay connected with others remotely during this time of need, comfort, and healing. Through the power of art, we can bond during this difficult time.

With an increase in cancellations throughout Wisconsin and across the globe, I cannot imagine life without art, openings, studio visits, events, and so on. The unknown is nerve-racking. So, instead of thinking about the things we are discouraged or cannot participate in, Artdose Magazine decided to bring people together and put as much art into this world as possible. This is the foundation of the magazine.

The Art Heals Movement has included art from artists accompanied by their artist statements and social media handles. This has led to facilitating weekly online artist talks, which are recorded and published at artdosemagazine.com. Most recently, it led to creating See & Discover. See & Discover provides the reader with a glimpse of what artists are doing inside their studios and how they are coping with this pandemic.

What inspired you to start these initiatives - and what do you hope to achieve with them?

These initiatives stem from being an art educator. My teaching philosophy is what drives what I do with any type of art programming whether it being school, community, or professionally-related. I put Art and Education at the forefront of whatever I set my mind to. Sharing art from artists, connecting virtually, being accessible, and seeking ways to show compassion, even it is from the other side of the screen, does make a difference. What I hope is that others will pass it forward and continue to support each other.

How have you, as an artist, been impacted by COVID-19?

COVID-19 has impacted the way I view and create art. I find myself being in my home studio more than I have been in quite a while. I find myself viewing more art, reading more art books, seeing more art documentaries, focusing on my own professional practices, and decluttering my environment. Right now, we have the gift of time, which I have been taking advantage of.



Have you been working on your own paintings in the studio during this time? If so, what's the current focus in your personal work?

My studio practice has lately been focused on mixed media collages, which incorporates my own photography. About a week ago, I started to paint again. My current focus in my personal work is to experiment, play, and to be in the moment.

What are your thoughts on the artist's role during a pandemic?

Artists are an integral part of our society. Artists are catalysts for change. **Artists are problem-solvers, critical thinkers, goal driven, and passionate about what they can bring to the forefront of this pandemic.** Art is our savior. I realize I may be preaching to the choir, but people need to understand that artists bring so much more than just their art to our screens, galleries, arts centers, art museums, etc. They bring vulnerability, contemplation, culture, celebration, and individuality. **They do make a difference in our communities and lives.**

"Artists are an integral part of our society. Artists are catalysts for change".

As we practice social isolation, virtual exhibitions have been on the rise. What are the benefits and drawbacks of virtual exhibition? Do you see this becoming more commonplace in the future?

I believe life will not return back to 100% where it was before this pandemic. Viewing art will become a combination of virtual and physical exhibitions, where exhibitions may sway more towards online exhibitions and/or by appointments. There will be a higher risk for personal health during crowded receptions, which could potentially be difficult to regulate by gallerists, staff, or volunteers.

As you know art is always better to be seen in person, but now we have more of a social responsibility to keep people safe. Benefits for virtual exhibition are the accessibility, convenience, and the frequency of exhibitions. The drawbacks could be lack of experience, communicating the tone of the exhibition, maintaining a high level of engagement, and making sales. Since closing my gallery in December 2019, I have found myself returning to curate online exhibitions.

What are some other examples of artistic aid and positivity that you've seen as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic? (i.e. Art Heals)

I have seen several arts organizations assist artists through their emergency relief funds such as ImagineMKE and fellowship.art. I have seen artists organize their own online art auctions on social media. I have seen artists contribute a portion of their sales to help their fellow artists. I have seen people buy more handmade items. I have seen artists stop making their own art to create masks for other people. I have seen galleries help other galleries by going virtual. I have seen art groups think outside the box to continue to support their artists.

This is what I love about what is happening right now – everyone helping everyone. By helping others, we help ourselves. It is not so much about me or you, it is about 'we'.

Websites:
artdosemagazine.com
frankjuarez.net
frankjuarezgalleries.com

Instagram:
[@artdosemagazine](https://www.instagram.com/artdosemagazine)
[@frankjuarezgalleries](https://www.instagram.com/frankjuarezgalleries)



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THE CORONA CHRONICLES BY THOMAS FERRELLA

Aaron Wilbers, WVA Magazine Editor

WVA Artist Thomas Ferrella is using the covid-19 crisis as fuel for a new body of work titled “The Corona Chronicles”. He is using the creative process to manifest a sense of truth for himself and sharing it with the world at large. He feels “deeply affected by life”, both in being overwhelmed by the negative and enamored with the positive. And in response to these emotions, he takes action in the form of making art. He believes that “Artists have a moral obligation to tell the truth. We know that history is written and ‘truth’ is interpreted by those with power and wealth, which is why artists need to be truth tellers in order to help balance that out”. An aspect of this “truth telling” can include not “shying away from works that may be challenging or difficult”.



The Corona Chronicles 2.5

one day, while reading the New York Times, he saw photos of empty streets and the idea coalesced further.

Ferrella stockpiles newspapers, repurposing them as wrapping paper or other things, and he has been collecting “strings of words” for years mainly to be used as titles for his work. For the past year he has been incorporating this verbiage into raw material for spoken word poetry performed with his band. For “The Corona Chronicles” he has been collecting recent headlines and covering tables and workspaces in his home/studio as a ready resource for this new work. After creating some preliminary pieces and receiving feedback from his daughter, the headline texts were then paired with his photography. The process currently involves the pairing of printed headlines torn out and placed onto his photographs, then the combination of the two are photographed into a single work.

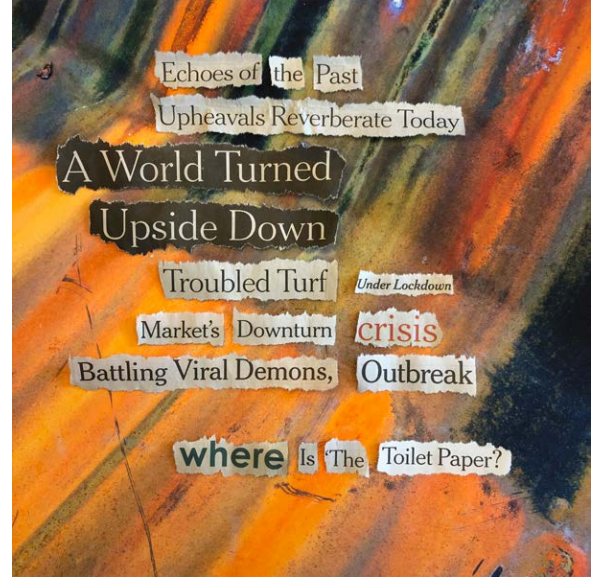


Unbridled creation too plays a role in the genesis of the corona series. Ferrella says he has “no filters when it comes to making his work”, feeling that each piece is worth making, choosing to proliferate rather than censor. He did not attend art school or learn art skills in an organized setting, and so eager experimentation has been his primary modus operandi. He willingly strays into new mediums on a regular basis. He has also been strongly influenced by his mother, Aralina, who works in a similar vein and “is an impressive folk artist”.

The Wisconsin Historical Society and UW-Madison Archives are cataloging “The Corona Chronicles” as a facet of documenting this point in history. Ferrella was already known to the society since

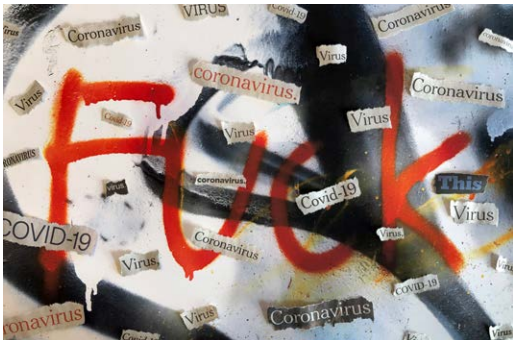
The Corona Chronicles 1.5, (top-right), The Corona Chronicles .4, (above-right), The Corona Chronicles 3.2, (left)

Unless otherwise noted, all works are collage of original photos and newspaper headlines, 12” x 12”



All images in this story © Thomas Ferrella





The Corona Chronicles 1.3, collage of original photos and newspaper headlines, 12" x 18"

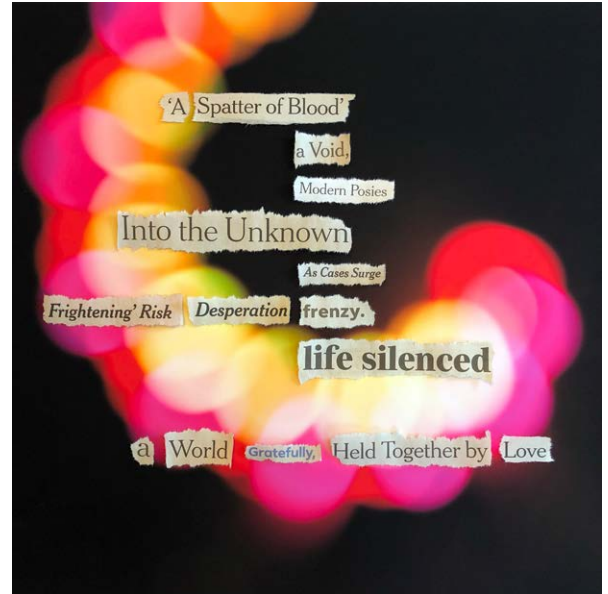
they are currently cataloging his running 30+ year photography project, "Wisconsin Roadside Memorials" (<http://wisconsinroadside Memorials.com/>). These organizations are archiving the "The Corona Chronicles" as the series progresses. Via the historical society, UW, and Ferrella's own social media (@artistthomasferrella), the works are being reposted in places as far away as London, England.

These works are unique among his other works, although the scope of his work is eclectic so he doesn't think of any of it as "typical". His most recent accomplishment just prior to "The Corona Chronicles" was a screening of his

experimental film, "MINDSTORM" which was accompanied to live music performed by his band in a planetarium in Madison. Both evening performances were sold out. He's also currently working on sewing an American flag from Chinese currency which will be his fourth flag in his "George" series. And he is painting American mythological creatures (such as the "Hodag") on sheets of etched copper for his "Mythos Americanus" series. In a field of widely varied experimentation, the process of creating the corona pieces is new, and typical only in that it is also atypical. However, the utilization of words in his art is something that is new for him. He is excited about this development, because he holds the literary arts in very high regard.

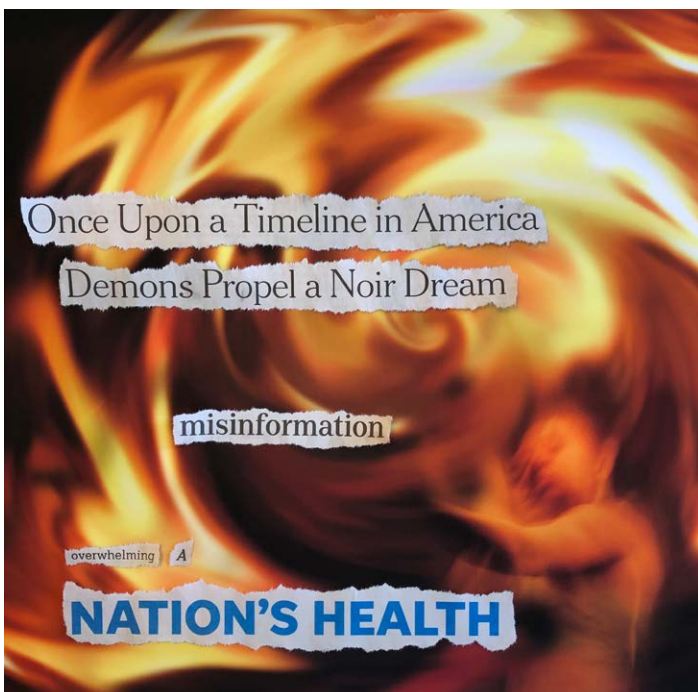
When asked if he had any pieces that hold special favor in the corona series, he replied that he "likes the simplicity of some pieces better, like the bubble one - which uses a photo he took in Portugal and superimposed it with two words "the future" - the beauty of the image he feels resonates beyond just the virus crisis and into other issues such as climate change, nuclear war and more". He feels that such a "broad and universal scope of issues are touched upon by using such a simple phrase and simple image, a reminder of our fragile existence so to speak".

In "The Corona Chronicles" piece "2.6", the subject of mental illness is addressed. Ferrella feels that "the U.S.A. has not addressed mental illness that is the result of fear-based politics, advertising, armed conflicts, racial issues. The way that

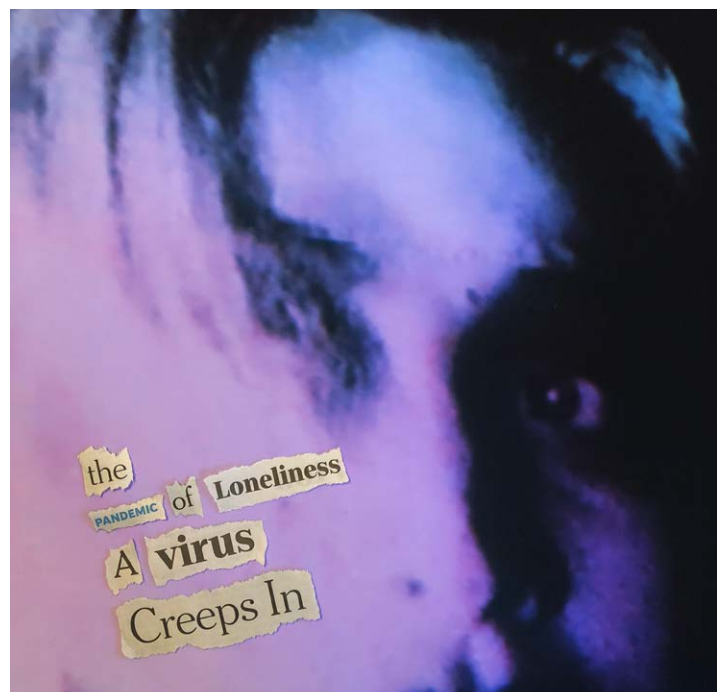


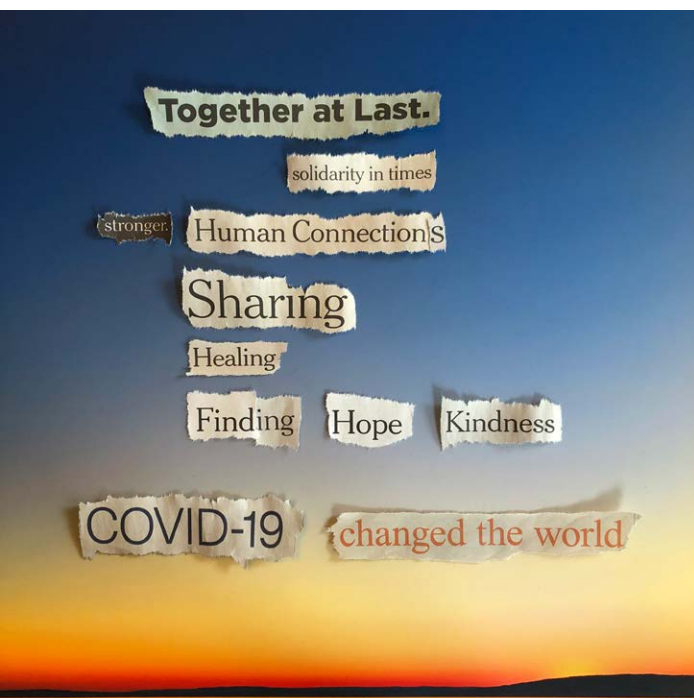
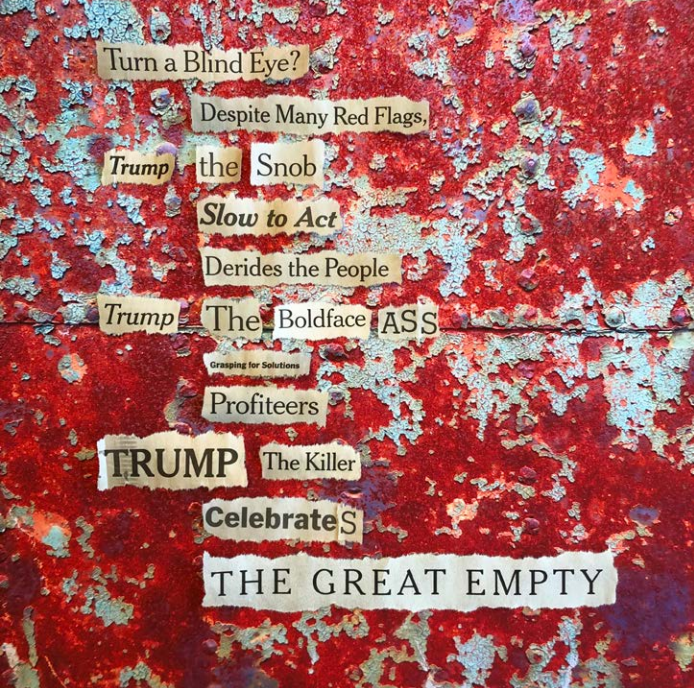
The Corona Chronicles 2.9

The Corona Chronicles 2.7




The Corona Chronicles 2.6





the corona virus has been made visible is currently causing mental illness, the reverberations of which will be felt well into the future”. His opinions about the virus are informed in part by his previous career of 30 years as an Emergency Trauma Specialist at Meriter Hospital. While worthy of caution and attention, he feels that the risk of covid-19 has been exploited by the media. For him, on any given workday, diseases like influenza, HIV, TB, SARS... were things that he had to be prepared to encounter and hospitals had to have appropriate action plans. He feels the covid-19 risk is serious, but also that people don’t understand it properly, especially when viewed alongside the world death statistics of illnesses like diarrhea, malaria, HIV and others. While very damaging, he notes that there have been positive effects on things like our carbon footprints, air pollution, a decrease in gun violence and cruise ship pollution. He thinks that covid-19 should be taken seriously, but also that the many other health, societal and environmental issues should be as well, and generally are not. The breadth of these issues and his views are shown in “The Corona Chronicles 2.6”, a snapshot of the horror of our fears. Not one to only see doom, he thinks that humor and irony are important to cling to in the midst of this crisis, reflected in his works dealing with toilet paper, or “60% off”.

Ferrella believes that the role of an artist in this pandemic is to do whatever they feel is right for them, not to do what others direct. “Artists can continue to make us laugh, give us a sense of awe, or offer a sense of escape”. A personal example he cited is that he’s been part of a band for 25 years, and now that it’s warm outside, they play outdoors and distanced, so they can keep making music for people to enjoy despite restrictions. In his words, “It’s up to artists to decide how they will navigate this new landscape”.

As we all move forward, Ferrella hopes that a result of the crisis is that people will focus more on building their own communities, and creating beauty and a sense of awe of where they live rather than thinking they must seek it in a far-flung place. In light of current events, he notes “The headlines have once again changed with the recent demonstrations and we should brace for a new set of horrors - the future seems as tenuous as a bubble”. 

You can see more of Thomas Ferrella’s work online at: <https://ferrella.com/>

The Corona Chronicles 1.6, (left-top), The Corona Chronicles 2.2, (left-middle), The Corona Chronicles .2, (left-bottom), The Corona Chronicles .8, (above)

30 YEARS AGO, SOUTH-CENTRAL & NORTHEAST CHAPTERS WERE BORN

Gary John Gresl

Most of our WVA members will not have been around to recall that from the year of our inception, 1900, thru 1989, our organization was **one single entity**, headquartered in Milwaukee. A few of us remember artists from the Madison and Green Bay areas had to drive the considerable distances to monthly Wisconsin Painters & Sculptors meetings in Milwaukee, where our organization first began in the year 1900.

Being President in the late 80's, I was approached first by some artists from the Madison area, Peggy Zalucah, chief among them. They believed there was sufficient interest in Madison to organize a group of artist members that could more easily gather in local monthly meetings and organize local exhibits and events, **while being affiliated with the established WP&S**. Almost coincidentally some artists from Green Bay approached me to see if they could do the same thing for their area.

WP&S had been expanding membership in the late 80's, and this was an opportunity that could benefit, and hopefully unite, many more artists in our shared interests and the cause of increasing the visibility of artistic talent and history in our state.

Peggy arranged a meeting site in Madison at which I could introduce WP&S and we could elaborate on the potential idea of creating "chapters", while being unified at a state level. We met in a large lecture hall somewhere in Madison, with a comfortable number of interested artists in attendance, including Sarah Aslakson and Lee Weiss. Peggy remained the life force in Madison, and became the Chair of that chapter for 4 stints. Ralph Knazinski became the first Chair of that chapter, though he did not complete his full term.

In a like manner the same year I drove to Green Bay to a meeting of interested artists, this held in the gallery of artist Gisella Moyer, with a decent number of artists attending and some persons willing to take on leadership roles. It went ahead. Christine Style soon became a leader within this chapter, and I am ashamed to say I have forgotten names of those very first attendees.

It was the task of those of us from Milwaukee to see to it that our Constitution was changed and expanded to account for new chapters to exist in harmony. Because we had a core of strength in both Madison and Green Bay, we intended to overcome any obstacles. Those obstacles included a considerable rewriting our state Constitution, dealing with responsibilities, membership fees, determining the roles of 3 chapters rather than just one, and establishing a State Board whereby all chapters could meet, plan, moving both jointly and separately, preparing for the unknowns of a new reality...three groups within one. In short time we have had State Board presidents from all chapters.

Congratulations, All! Three chapters have managed to survive for 30 years, extending the life of WVA into its 120th year of continuous operation. In addition, after hoping for decades, we recently added the part-time position of Executive Director, thanks to the support of our **WVA Endowment Fund**, also begun in the late 1980's.

Again, we have new leadership, some fresh visions, and the ongoing support of experienced members to see our way into the future. Best of good fortune to all involved. The work of leaders does require patience, hard work, affection and tolerance for your fellow members. But I'd say that 120 years of continual operation is proof that we will keep on advancing and doing good for artists and the visual arts of our state.

About the Author

Gary John Gresl has served as WVA President, V.P., Treasurer, and all other positions. He is the Founder and Co-Chair of the Wisconsin Visual Art Lifetime Achievement Awards. His work can be found in the permanent collection of MOWA and others. More information at: www.gresl.com

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For the individual or organization wishing to support the arts in Wisconsin

As a [full-time arts-entrepreneur](#), I am a statistical anomaly. I am a woman of color from a working class immigrant family, and an unlikely candidate to have built a successful arts business, when only one percent of artists make it full-time. Like everyone, I'm nervous. With so many things vying for our attention, can arts & culture workers survive this? But my path to this life has taught me the importance of the unlikely story, and about the value of the arts at unprecedented times. Here's what I see in the wake of this pandemic.

Wisconsin is already [50th in the nation for arts funding](#), and the [U.S. is last among developed nations](#). In 2011, the Scott Walker administration [slashed two-thirds of the state arts budget](#). Wisconsin's annual arts budget is \$790,000, 14 cents per person. In the last nine years, we have neither restored previous funding nor kept up with inflation.

This economic crisis will make it harder to convince people that funding the arts matters. But for anyone who has studied even the highlight reel of history, destroying art and books usually spells the end of civilization. Paltry support has put the arts industry at a disadvantage during good times, and on the brink of collapse during a crisis.

Then there's the issue of representation. In 1989, [the Guerrilla Girls created their iconic poster](#), "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female."



Photo by Polina Zimmerman from Pexels

[Women artists still only make up 13% of US museum collections](#). Women of color make up less than half of one percent of US museum collections despite being 18% of the population (we have yet to catch up to where white women were in the '80s). This conversation finally became mainstream in 2019. [But as museums lay off their staff](#), it's unlikely that they will be buying art from women of color anytime soon. **We value the people we represent. If we don't see diverse people in our art, our system won't see them either.**

If this all sounds like bad news, none of it is news. Public infrastructure was important before the crisis. Fair pay for labor was important before the crisis. Cultural representation was important before the crisis. All of this was true before the crisis.

The only way out is to fix these issues now. **A crisis is an opportunity for a correction.**

The federal response to COVID-19 has fallen short, so it will be up to state and local governments to define priorities. When I applied for the [SBA loan](#), art businesses were not listed as a category. We need local government to do better, to treat the arts as equal to other industries. We need art to be on every economic agenda, from municipalities' Community & Economic Development teams to state legislators. The states and municipalities that protect arts & culture will be the visionaries on the other side of this.

In lieu of public infrastructure, arts nonprofits have become the scaffolding for artists' careers. But most don't include artists' pay as a part of their budgets beyond \$100 token honorariums. We need nonprofit leaders to use this crisis for a paradigm shift, and to be the visionary model of diverse, creative labor to the for-profit sector. Maybe it's a hard sell to tell arts nonprofits that are losing money to have artists' pay and representation at the top of their agendas. But if not now, when? Cash is king during a recession, and cash needs to make it into the hands of laborers. Nonprofits exist to close social gaps. The organizations that use this time to redesign themselves, and include the wellbeing of laborers at the core of that design, will be the frontrunners of an economy that works better for everyone.

Finally, we have to overcome "busy culture," even in our search for solutions. Tip jars are a fine bandage, but they are no more the solution than GoFundMe is a replacement for affordable healthcare. We need the leaders in our public sector, our businesses, and our nonprofits to work together to stabilize the industry and alleviate the pressure on individuals to make up the difference.

The gift that could come from a shutdown is suddenly a lot of people have space and time. With everything canceled, what if this could be our local, cultural renaissance? This will only happen if we relieve people of the urgency to take care of their basic needs. If we can reclaim our time and space, then we can turn a crisis into a chance to rebuild a society as resilient as it is visionary.

About the Author

Jenie Gao is a full-time artist, creative director, and entrepreneur based in Madison, Wisconsin. She consults organizations on the landmark ideas that define who we are. Learn more about her work at [jenie.org](#)



CABIN FEVER CREATIVE COMMUNITY

An interview with Helen Klebesadel | Ally Wilber, WVA Executive Director

What inspired you to start this initiative (Cabin Fever Creative Community) - and what do you hope to achieve with it?

In February until mid-March 2020 my husband and I and our dog were avoiding the Wisconsin snows by van camping our way through Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. As we headed home the news was 24/7 coronavirus. As the danger of Covid-19 became clear I found myself canceling two art exhibitions that were scheduled in April and May, and cancelling upcoming face-to-face art and art coaching workshops.

We arrived back in Madison March 13th and went immediately into self isolation. On Sunday March 15th I started a group called the Cabin Fever Creative Community. It was inspired by my communication with fellow artists, students, and clients. I found that some of the people I know felt anxious and vulnerable in the face of shut down and the unknown. I created the group for three reasons: 1) to give creatives a way to use making and sharing their art to fight the emotional consequence of the times, 2) to dilute the constant political and pandemic posts on Facebook with art, and 3) to create an online creative community for people at all levels to encourage our creativity in all media as an act of resistance to both the virus and the polarizing politics that surround us. The world is not better if we do not make art.

Has this online community stayed true to the original vision? If not, how has it transformed?

It has transformed by becoming much larger than I expected. It has also turned out to be a huge learning experience and a way to share valuable resources (I have received thanks from grant recipients due to resources shared). Basically it is doing exactly what I had hoped it would do, and more.

It is actually a lot of fun and I am personally grateful for the very diversion I was trying to create for other people. I love seeing the art of professional artists who use their skills and talents to speak to the world, and who are sharing resources, exhibitions, and performances that uplift and divert us every bit as much I love seeing the work of people who are just starting to make art, or who are returning to their creative work after years away as a way to use the extra time we find ourselves with. We are seeing an amazing array of creative work. This part is overwhelmingly positive.

What do you typically see posted in the group?

Everyday I am surprised. There is nothing typical, but there are a lot of posts that are from insecure “newbie” creatives who are terrified and brave as they venture out with their very first posts of their creative work. Too many apologize for their work, but there is a great team of supportive artists who see what’s going on and know the world is better if they make their art and creative work than if they do not.

So many of us have lost all our means of earning income because of pandemic cancelations. So I encourage people to introduce



A Change is Gonna Come: Tidepools in Peril Series, collaborative watercolor by Mary Kay Neumann and Helen Klebesadel, 2020.

themselves and their art and to share links to where their creations may be available for sale (this has turned out to be expensive for some of us on the list). A high percentage of participants who remain engaged members of the community share other contributions: commenting on what is posted, sharing resources and encouragement.

Have you been working on your own pieces in the studio during this time? If so, what's the current focus in your personal work?

Yes, I have committed myself to daily studio time. At first I had to complete pieces for a cancelled collaborative exhibition recognizing Earth Day, April 22, 2020 with Mary Kay Neumann. The first order of business was creating a virtual version of that exhibition and getting it out in the world anyway. It is called 'The Flowers Are Burning...Oceans A Rising.'

[You can see it here: The Flowers Are Burning...Oceans A Rising](#)

My second priority was to complete a piece going to a museum exhibition in Greece. I also have a series of paintings going that are active forms of meditation. They are, appropriately for the times, entitled 'Everything is Connected'.

What are your thoughts on the artist's role during a pandemic?

Before the pandemic the arts contributed more to the economy than agriculture. Artists are always creative thinkers and creative problem solvers. Each artist contributes in some way to the overall health, development, and well-being of society. Creative thinkers and makers, especially during the pandemic, can provide our communities with inspiration, joy, interaction, and vision. We also give thoughtful critique to our political, cultural, economic, and social systems. We push communities to engage thoughtfully and make steps toward social progress. I hope that we can help to create a vision for a better new normal. That's the world we have left behind. When invited to participate, we can provide both vision and leadership.

[Facebook group link: Cabin Fever Creative Community](#)

MASKS FOR THE MIDWEST | Edita Birschbach

NOTE: The views, information, and opinions expressed in this magazine are solely those of the individuals being interviewed and do not necessarily represent those of the Wisconsin Visual Artists organization. The primary purpose of this publication is to educate and inform.

March 21, 2020:

"I've just talked to my sister who lives in the Czech Republic. They have over 900 cases of the coronavirus, almost 700 more than five days ago. That's us in Wisconsin today. Since there is a shortage of masks, people make their own that they can wash and reuse. The best are the ones with a pocket for a one-time use filter (e.g. HEPA filter)."

On March 21st, upon communicating the current mask shortage, Edita Birschbach (of NE chapter) started the Masks for the Midwest online group. The group, with 67 members, is a collaboration on the construction and delivery of masks throughout the midwest. Creative problem solving in regards to comfort for healthcare professionals and using unexpected materials (such as socks) to create face masks are discussed in this group, as well as material logistics. Did you know that fabric masks can be worn only for up to 4 hours, or until they become wet? Those bringing masks to work should have multiple on hand for this reason.

Edita, along with a sewing partner, has helped make over 300 masks, and declares that she will continue "until there is no fabric left to cut." She says that the artist's role in this pandemic is to "make some non-essential, wonderful beauty."

"We are going to beat this and we are going to realize that our country needs the single-payer system = affordable health care for everybody."

[Find them on Facebook: Masks for the Midwest](#)

[Instagram: @edita.birschbach](#)



Edita, in the first mask she made (from a bedsheet bag)

FOLLOW WVA ON INSTAGRAM!

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We have 449 followers currently - a number that's growing every day! (+87 since May)

If you'd like your work to be featured on our instagram and Facebook pages, please email

Ally at director@wisconsinvisualartists.org with a high

resolution image (low quality/out of focus images will not be used), title of the piece, medium, your name, and your current city. New to instagram? Here's a helpful link: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-use-instagram>

TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIPS

Many WVA memberships payments are due soon. Please watch for an email reminding you, or you may go directly to the WVA website and renew from there.

Please sign in to the WVA Website, go to your Membership Account page and select "renew membership". (Note: You can also update any of your information, like your statement/bio, just remember to scroll down to "Update User" at the bottom or your changes won't be saved!)

You do not need a PayPal account to renew, they are the processor we use, but your information is not stored unless you choose to do so.

Thank you for continuing to make Wisconsin Visual Artists the largest, most active organization for artists in the state. There are many new and exciting things ahead of us!

TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIPS

WVA is proud to support the future of Wisconsin Creativity, seen in the online exhibit hosted on the WVA website - The South Central Conference High School Digital ART Show 2020. [Click here to visit it.](#)



MEMBER NEWS

EXHIBITS

DENISE PRESNELL: "2020 Alive in the Arts", Gallery 110 North Plymouth, Plymouth Arts Center, 520 E. Mill St., Plymouth, WI. June 5 – August 7, 2020. Denise Presnell's oil and cold wax painting, "Winter Blues" has been selected to be



included this juried art exhibition. Gallery hours are 12:00 – 3:00, Tuesday - Sunday.

VICTORIA "TORI" TASCH: "Spring Showcase", Vox Populi

Print Collective", SHIM Network. Tori is happy to report that the Vox Populi Spring 2020 Showcase Exhibition is now LIVE on Artsy.net! "Vox Populi" is a printmaking guild that seeks to elevate, celebrate, and promote fine art printmaking in the US and abroad. Participating guild members create, curate, and fund exhibitions exclusively for its members. **To apply to Vox Populi Print Collective, click here** Basic membership includes: Invitations to participate in guild



and member-initiated exhibitions, portfolios, and projects, Info listed on SHIM's Exhibitor Group Page. Premium membership includes: All Basic Membership benefits, plus Artsy uploads per quarter and per exhibition, Invitations to participate in Vox Populi exhibitions organized via SHIM Art Network, and discounts on Exhibitor Fees. [See this online exhibit of beautiful work, click here](#)



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