



## Newsletter – January 2011

### Treasures in Central Massachusetts

Late September was a gorgeous time for a trip to Northampton and Amherst to join NMWA members from central MA and students from Bard College at Simon's Rock for a guided tour of special exhibitions at the Smith College Museum of Art. We first saw "Luscious: Paintings by Emily Eveleth." The title describes both her rich application of paint and the subject matter, gigantic still lifes of jelly donuts. One could see baked goods as metaphors for landscapes of boulders or sensuous flesh, while her titles like "Snake Eyes" and "Unbridled Ambition" evoke pulp fiction.

The Museum also held an exhibition called "Sugar" by Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, but the theme of this show was entirely different from "Luscious." Campos-Pons populated a room with African spears and stools, sugar disks, and glass to symbolize the Afro-Cuban diaspora and the slave trade tied to sugar. She also worked with video, textiles, and ceramic representations of distillery towers.

From Northampton we drove to Amherst to visit the home of Emily Dickinson and the remains of the family farm where she lived as a reclusive poet. Some of our group participated in the marathon reading of all 1,789 of her poems. We had an excellent and knowledgeable guide who has just created the latest DVD on Dickinson and

who quoted from various poems, discussed her family life, and showed us a replica of the white dress that Dickinson usually wore. He revealed she was a redhead.

At the nearby campus of U. Mass. Amherst Anna Schulheit, painter and former winner of a McArthur Foundation Award, talked about the inspiration and execution of her mural on the exterior of the library. It is a handsome abstract until the subject is revealed in reverse reflected in the adjoining pool. One must look into the water to discover the face that the artist painted upside down on the wall.



Our day was complete with a reception at The Artisan Gallery where we admired the beautiful handmade items for sale and had a most interesting exchange with Christy Knox, a potter who uses nature as her inspiration to produce functional as well as beautiful pieces.

Sunday began with a brunch and presentations by several women artists from the Pioneer Valley. A slide presentation of their art and a little information about their struggles and successes kept everyone enthralled. Following the brunch, attendees moved on to Florence and the Zea Mays Printmaking Studio where there were demonstrations and hands-on opportunities. We all went home with a real sense of the exciting and creative community of women artists who are active in the Northampton area!



## Trip to Providence

Seventeen women met in Providence in October for a selective tour of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art arranged by Noreen Andreoli, President of the National Advisory Board and Honorary Trustee, and Cathy Bert, Honorary Trustee. We were privileged to see Manet's portrait of Berthe Morisot and the newly acquired Morisot oil study of her daughter looking out the window of her Paris apartment at the snow, 'L'Enfant au Tablier Rouge.'

In the new print dept. Emily Peters, associate curator, showed us several dozen works by women artists spanning nearly 400 years. Subject matter ranged from self-portraits to botanicals to war posters and more, all produced with great skill.



Next, Judith Tannenbaum, curator of contemporary art, guided us through the Lynda Benglis retrospective discussing how her work combines painting and sculpture by knotting, folding, twisting, spraying, pouring, wrapping, and casting.

Noreen and Cathy arranged for lunch at the Providence Art Club. Club President Daniel Mechnig spoke of the paintings around us by Edward Bannister and George Whitaker who were among the 16 men and women Club founders. As we finished a fine meal, Alice Neesom, a local ceramicist, spoke of her work and that of others.

Upstairs, we heard from photographer Reenie Barrow in the exhibition of her lyrical sepia photos of flowers. She credits printing on Japanese rice paper for her look, but it is her composition and values that primarily attract the viewer.

Last treat of the day was the shop of Andrea Valentini, a RISD graduate, now a recognized furnishings and accessories designer, using materials previous considered industrial. Her handbags, manufactured in Rhode Island, look and feel like textured leather but are stain resistant and fire-retardant. "Your bag is your mobile home," she told us. Andrea has dedicated an exhibition space called the Launch Gallery in her shop for

RISD seniors. She is happy to give back to a school she feels offered her so much.

## Sheila Hicks: 50 Years

Susan Faxon, associate director of the newly renovated Addison Gallery of Art in Andover, led twenty-four members and guests through Sheila Hicks' retrospective. The exhibition had been in planning six years since many of her pieces are large corporate installations around the world. Ms. Faxon, who also curated the show, discussed the progress of her work from woven wool belts to massive textile sculptures made of various fibers. The largest piece she has made, nearly the length of a football field, was represented by a watercolor study.

Hicks trained at Yale under colorist Joseph Albers, South and MesoAmerican scholar George Kubler, and architect Louis Kahn, all of whom had a lasting influence on her choices. After working for years in South America and Mexico, she moved to Paris where she has lived since 1964.

She was always open to examining different cultures, media, techniques, and materials. Many pieces combine weaving with binding, knotting, and looping. Her color palette can be subtle or joyous. Her installations are hung or stacked or piled in Europe, Arabia, the Far East, and America.

After the tour, there was the usual visit to the gift shop where we found handbags by Andrea Valentini! The Phillips Academy offered everyone refreshments in the Commons' Mural Room.



## Beauty in Unexpected Places

A dozen-plus wind-blown members and guests of MA-NMWA enjoyed an amazing array of permanent sculpture exhibitions throughout the Forest Hills Cemetery on Saturday, October 16th. Leading the glorious autumn walk through the grounds was Cecily Miller, Executive Director of the Forest Hills Educational Trust, who introduced two women sculptors that accompanied the group to talk about their works. Cecily has established cultural programs inspired by the landscape, history and spiritual mission of the Cemetery, including an ongoing Contemporary Sculpture Path exploring themes of nature, family, memory, identity, and the cycle of life.

Danielle Krcmar talked about her works "Things Worth Remembering" and "Resting Benches."

Andrea Thompson discussed the inspiration behind her installation "Knock on Wood" and her more recent work in the "Portals" exhibition at Vine Hill Cemetery in Medfield, MA. Visitors can tour the contemporary and Victorian sculpture paths on their own with a map available at the visitor information office and kiosk. Forest Hills Cemetery is located at 95

Forest Hills Avenue, Jamaica Plain, MA. For more information on visiting hours and events, visit the website at [www.foresthillstrust.org](http://www.foresthillstrust.org).

## State House Tour

Our December program was a celebration of women's contributions to the arts and public life in Massachusetts, and a fun and festive way to experience the holiday season. At the State House, Ellen Rothman, a representative of the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities on the original project team, explained the history of "Hear Us." This work by Sheila Levrant de Bretteville and Susan Sellers, installed in 1999, honors and recognizes women who contributed to public life in Massachusetts. It is the centerpiece of the State House Women's Leadership Project and was conceived to portray a single woman who has contributed to the government of our Commonwealth.

The advisory committee formed to implement the project recommended six women: Dorothea Dix, Lucy Stone, Sarah Parker Remond, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Mary Kenney O'Sullivan and Florence Luscomb. The bronze relief portraits of these six women are the first and only real women (not allegorical women) pictured in our State House. Two quotations from the writings or speeches of each woman honored are etched into the marble beneath her bronze-bust likeness.

We then toured the House and Senate chambers and visited Senate President Murray's chambers, decorated for the holidays by members of her constituency. Mary Hart described the special details in the President Murray's chambers, and Minnie Fannin described the history of the State House restoration. Special thanks go to MA-NMWA member Sara Chase who described her role in the restoration.

Following our tour, President Emeritus June Hutchinson and her husband welcomed us to their historic Beacon Hill home for a gracious holiday reception.

## Thank You

We would like to thank Mary Ned Fotis, our photographer, for her wonderful work. She often isn't allowed to take pictures in some of our venues but compensates with many fine images outside the exhibitions. We wish we had room to show more of her work.

