

Sketches

Thoughts from the LCAL president

We are inclusive. From the academically trained professional to the weekend dabbler, your Art League includes members of various gifts and interests. Initially we were more exclusive, and putative artists were required to measure up to peer judgment before becoming an “artist member.” Those whose work did not pass muster with the Executive Board were designated “patrons,” and these remained in the lower membership status until their submitted work was brought up to snuff. But that was long ago.

Today, our membership includes all who share our interest in art, and all who share our purpose in developing a higher appreciation of visual art. While our focus has remained constant, our locus had broadened over the years; we have matured from being a Waukegan centered group, to being inclusive of all of Lake County and beyond. Our active members come from Lake Zurich and Antioch, Zion to Lake Forest. You don't have to be a resident of Lake County to be a Lake County Art League member.

Please invite prospective members to attend our activities and to see for themselves the value of membership. Our membership dues are quite reasonable; our dues are lower than other art organizations in our area; and we require no commitment of time to remain an active member. Time is an especially scarce resource for working people. What we offer are opportunities to attend demonstrations by artists who have mastered a variety of art media. We offer free library volumes to those of us who would be self-taught. We provide valuable critiques for those who submit their work for evaluation by qualified instructors. We sponsor plein air activities for outdoor art enthusiasts. Best of all, we offer the good companionship of many like-minded artists.

While our membership numbers have been constant in recent years, your Art League will be refreshed and invigorated with the infusion of new people. And when we do find new members in our midst, let's celebrate them! A word of timely encouragement- who doesn't welcome that? Be sure to have a few copies of our membership brochure handy, and pass them on to prospects. Members who bring in new members will be recognized with our thanks.

Recognition is due to those who have volunteered their time to keep our Art League working. Thanks to Susan Schneider who served for years as our Program Director. Susan was recently

replaced by a committee consisting of Roberta Bragg, Jeff Harold and Linda Rodriguez. Thanks to Beth Engle who has served as Treasurer for many years. Chris Tanner produces this newsletter as Corresponding Secretary, and has been serving as the On-the Wall Director. Jack Littlefield is the Board's Recording Secretary and Mary Neely, a person who gets stuff done, is our Vice President. Membership Directorship is co-chaired by Betty Perri and Leslie Nauta. Our nurture is generously provided by Hospitality Directors, Fran Isaac and Sunny Parenteau. Our Librarian is Debbie Kalinowski, and our website is managed by Phil Schorn. Scholarships and tours are directed by Val Brandner, and legacy art by Thom Kapheim. Past President Ali Abakri is volunteering as Publicity Director and Undercroft Gallery director. Plein air (outdoor art) activities are also directed by Chris Tanner, together with Deb Edmunds.

The position of Workshop Director is currently vacant and open to an interested volunteer, as will be the position of President, as yours truly will be put out to pasture this June, by virtue of our Constitution (Article 8). Thanks for the honor of serving you.

Happy Holidays,
Oliver Steven Merriam
Current Lake County Art League President

Fall Membership Show Closing Critique November 18

This is a great opportunity to bring a prospective new member to experience the energy, talent and warmth of our organization. It's also a time to listen and learn.

This year's Fall Membership Show will conclude with a closing critique of 43 entries on the evening of November 18 in the Benny Center theatre. The critique will be from 7:00 to 9:00 pm with a 20-minute break.

The critique will be performed by Tom Trausch. Tom and his wife Gale have a Woodstock gallery where they often teach, and Tom conducts workshops locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. He has done critiques and workshops for LCAL, so many of us have come to know Tom as a kind and insightful teacher. Below you can see him doing one of the thumbnail value studies he famously champions. His own writing gives a sense of what to expect at the critique:

"Having been a career artist for the last 37 years has given me the opportunity to paint (en plein air), travel and visit great museums in the United States and in several European countries. My work is driven by the use of both light and color ... forces that add energy to the work. I believe that this light can impart a spiritual quality that resonates with the viewer. The design, shapes and the underlying abstract quality behind the painting are of great interest to me. These elements are what ultimately determine if the painting will succeed.

"My years as an artist have been about equally divided between the mediums of watercolor and oils, each with its own properties and end results. Always a challenge, making art allows one to explore more deeply and inevitably find out more about the maker, the artist."



See Tom's website at <http://www.trauschfinearts.com> for details of his background and examples of his work.



Grass-Roots Membership Drive

The art league Board of Directors, at its October meeting, committed to initiate a low-key membership drive through personal contact. Our membership has held steady, with new members offsetting those who leave, but we need to grow a bit to better pursue our purpose of bringing the visual arts to the citizens of Lake County. The drive itself will promote discussion of the arts and help us connect better with county artists and what Oliver Merriam calls the “continuously evolving art scene” there. Most importantly, new members will expand our contact within the community as a whole. Just like we acknowledge a member's artistic efforts, we must now make a point of acknowledging members who bring in new members.

A portion of our general meetings will be allotted to this effort. We will get 200 new trifold brochures printed so they can be distributed at general meetings. Members will be encouraged to brainstorm ideas to increase our number. All members should have and hand out LCAL brochures, engage in conversations about the benefits of any art league, and those who have volunteered should mention the benefits of that as well.

Our own experience is that pervasive sharing among ourselves helps amateurs as well as professionals, so we should recruit both. We get excited by accomplished art, growth at any level, and bold experiments. Our conversations are about successes and our frustrations. We guide and complement each other and we individually feed on the energy, enthusiasm and pride of the whole. Talk about how all of this generosity has helped you as an artist.

Members also need to visit other art organizations and even become involved with them. Some of our best presentations and ideas come from contact with groups like our own. Every organization is different and we learn about the needs and concerns of both artist and citizen from those differences.

The tangible benefits for LCAL members will naturally come up:

- Our spring and fall membership shows at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts are popular with our members, especially the closing professional critiques in the Benny Theatre. Each year 30-40% of our artists enter a piece in either or both shows. competition of new work, and an endless conversation about art.
- That is complimented by an annual five-person “invitational” show at the David Adler Music and Arts Center that showcases all levels of talents in a very professional venue. In our ninth year we will have introduced 35 different artists to central Lake County.
- We have an ever-changing lending library with hundreds of books and videos.
- Each of our six general meetings feature presentations, demonstrations, a casual competition of new work, and an endless conversation about art.
- With another art league we manage 8-10 On-The-Wall venues in Lake County for display and even for community presentations.
- Each year we provide modest scholarship cash awards to College of Lake County art students. The giving is as much fun as the receiving, because the work produced by these young artists is inspiring.
- Three newsletters keep our members informed. One deals with art league programs and possibilities. Another is about member news, shows, classes, insights, and maybe a little whimsy. A third newsletter tracks the availability of On-The-Wall display opportunities.
- Our web site is professionally produced. Our Facebook presence is growing, even to communicate plain air opportunities that have open to the public for over ten years.
- A new program will provide a home for what we call legacy art, the accomplished works of deceased artists whose descendants have way too little wall space for it all. We take title to, care for, store and from time to time display this art in public spaces.
- Tours, workshops and festivals are in the planning. Those programs had to be cut or cut back by us and others as the recession forced artists to cut expenses and discretionary time, but we sense the time has again come to publicly embrace the fruits and discipline that come with our artistic gift.

Christmas Party Tuesday December 17

The Christmas party will again be at the River Room under the Family Piano store in the gallery area of Waukegan. The party will be Tuesday December 17, 4-6:00 pm at 118 S. Genesee St.

Park in the street (you will need some quarters), enter Family Piano at the front of the store, and use the stairs at the back of the building. Windows in the River Room look into the Waukegan River ravine.

This is a budget-friendly Pot Luck affair, where you bring a dish to pass, drinks to share, dance to the oldies from Ali’s boom-box, and hang around briefly for cleanup in the free space. We have the room from 3:00 to 7:00, with the first hour for setup and the last hour for cleanup and your best holiday wishes.

We Elect Next LCAL President in April

Our constitution tells us to do this every two years, and this time Debbie Kalinowski will chair the election. She will be helped by Chris Tanner, Oliver Merriam and our many directors. Contact Debbie at 224-221-1348 or at artbydebbiek@gmail.com if you too would like to help.