



Summer 2009 E-Newsletter Volume X No. 4
www.DIArts.org

Gathering 2009: Challenges and Triumphs "The Contemplative Artist and the Recovery of Paradise"



The DIA Board's choice of venue for the 2009 Gathering was an experiment that began with the question, "Would holding the event at a site other than a Dominican motherhouse free the Planning Commission from multiple tasks and pressure?" Three days at Xavier Retreat Center in Convent Station, NJ yielded an unambiguous answer: "No!" Thanks largely to the crisis-management skills of Barbara Schwarz OP and Pat Daly OPA, with the support of Kathleen Rhody OPA and Elizabeth Michael Boyle OP, most scheduled events went smoothly, but the distinctive contribution of a Dominican resident community was never more deeply appreciated than in its absence. Fervent DIA participants assured that there was no deficit of enthusiasm as the group moved from an artistic reflection day

through a traditional schedule of prayer, workshops, personal sharing and entertainment.



Guest speaker

Kathleen Deignan, CND, musician, author and founding Director of the Iona Spirituality Center, modeled the preaching

power of the arts in a series of interactive presentations that integrated scholarship, original music, photography and dance. Sandra Rivera, choreographer and founder of Omega Liturgical Dance, interpreted songs as participants sang refrains.



All appreciated the speaker's enlightening research into the eco-theology of Dominican saints. The most frequent comment heard was: "I need time to digest all of this!" Memorable quotations from the presentation appear on OPalette's last page.



Creative energy, music, and laughter echoed through the halls of Xavier Center as DIA artists splashed, sang, twisted, struggled, and triumphed under the expert coaching of Dominic DeLay OP, Paula Marie Jarosz OP, Pat Lee OP, Rudolph Lowenstein OP, Daniel Rolland OP and Thoma Swanson OP.



Artifacts generously donated to the raffle by member artists earned over \$500 for the DIA treasury. Thank you for donations and for buying tickets!

Through all and above all, there was bonding. Relationships rooted in art blossomed and scattered seeds for “ekphrastic” projects while dedication to the DIA was renewed and strengthened. In her stirring homily at the closing liturgy, Barbara Schwarz reiterated this theme as she urged members to affirm and sustain each other throughout the year. Already, Gathering 2010 feels well on its way.



A concert, “Black and White,” offered by Dominic DeLay OP and John Paul Forte OP followed by a magical performance by Daniel Rolland OP enlivened an evening of refreshments

contributed by the Caldwell Dominican Community.

Mark your calendars!
DIA ANNUAL GATHERING 2010
July 28 – 31, 2010
Grand Rapids, Michigan



With grateful hearts we pose yet one more time!



FRA ANGELICO AWARD HONORS DIA POET



Martha Bartholomew OPA poet and weaver
and so much more.

Martha Bartholomew OPA, poet, preacher and spiritual director, was named 2009 recipient of the Fra Angelico Award, the DIA's highest honor. In her citation, Lucianne Siers OP praised Martha for having "graced us with musical lyrics, beautiful metaphors and deep illustrations of life and spirituality for decades." An Associate Member of the Sinsinawa Dominicans, Martha is a wife, mother and grandmother who currently conducts retreats from her home, now known as Siloam Retreat-House of Prayer near Dundee, Illinois.

Studies in art, religion, and spirituality earned Martha degrees at Mundelein and Loyola University in Chicago and culminated in a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Graduate Theology Foundation in Donaldson, Indiana. Martha has published books in both poetry and prose, but it is for her contributions in poetry and weaving that she is most admired within the Dominican Institute for the Arts.

Health concerns prevented Martha from attending this year's Gathering, so she listened to the news of the DIA's Fra Angelico Award being bestowed upon her and the applause of the members through Lucianne's cell phone. A startled Martha stammered, "For once this poet is without words!" Later she emailed a fulsome response:

Curiously, that very morning I had been seeing off a retreatant here at Siloam, an artist/teacher/art therapist. On impulse, I picked up a copy of "The Most Important Poem You Will Ever Read Will Be Your Own." We spent a few minutes talking about how, whatever the media, the artist is one who expresses the depth of his/her contemplation and becomes Word as the work is enfleshed.

As Dominican Artists, we are ever more aware of the way we preach through our works. They are largely the fossils of our inner experience, aren't they? May we continue to inspire, delight, evoke, encourage, admonish—whatever—each other. And maybe next year at Grand Rapids, we can try again to weave with words.

Deo Gratias. Et tu. Love, Martha

New Board Members Elected

The newly-approved amendment to the DIA Constitution was promptly implemented with the Board Elections of 2009. The voluntary departure of Elizabeth Michael Boyle OP and Lorraine Ferguson OP set in motion a rotation process that assures both continuity and change.

Gathering Participants elected three new Board Members: Dominic DeLay OP, Colleen Gallagher OP and Mary Pat Reid OP, all long-time active DIA enthusiasts. Lucianne Siers OP expressed special gratitude to Jude Bloch OP for her long service to the DIA as a board member.

At its first meeting before leaving Xavier Center, the Board chose the following officers:

Chair -	Liz Sully OP
Co-chair	Lucianne Siers OP
Secretary -	Dominic DeLay OP
Membership -	Colleen Gallagher OP
Treasurer -	Ann Eigenbauer OP
Communications -	Carol O'Connor OPA
Member at Large -	Mary Pat Reid OP

Spirit of the DIA Recognition

At the conclusion of Vespers on July 17, Lucianne Siers OP and the Board expressed the appreciation of the DIA for the following members who uniquely embody its spirit of preaching through the Arts as well as service given to the DIA:

- Pat Lee OP
- Kathleen Rhody OPL
- Elaine Taylor, OP
- Kathleen Voss, OP

Is There An Ekphrastic Artist in the House?

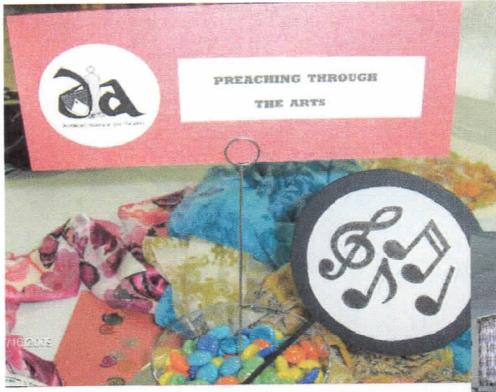
An Invitation

Since the conclusion of the July Gathering, Google has reported an unprecedented surge of hits on the "ekphrastic" websites. You can credit the DIA. *Ekphrastic* is the official name for art which responds to another artifact. The term was introduced at the Gathering during the "Arts as Preaching" session when Elizabeth Michael Boyle OP and Joeann Daley OP shared how Joeann's etching "Streets of Yesteryear" had provoked their exchange of spiritual inspiration. That conversation started other DIA artists buzzing about possibilities. Predictably, these speculations began to wander into the absurd, e.g., "Eggs ekphrastic for breakfast, anyone?"

According to Jennifer Bosveld who runs a webpage on the subject, *ekphrasis* usually consists of writing poetry in response to any kind of painting, sculpture, dance, movie or carving. Most poets have been doing this all their lives without naming it. The term applies equally, however, to a visual or musical response to a work of literature. The film "The Girl with the Pearl Earring" and the symphonic work "Thus Spach Zarusthustra" would be good examples.

How about you? DIA seems like fertile territory for works that preach to each other. Start a conversation in art and send the outcomes to our newsletter editors.

In this newsletter, you will find another DIA art work that inspired a poem about a spiritual experience familiar to all artists.

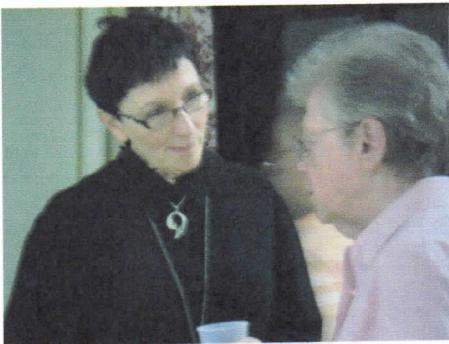


DIA Gathering 2009

Convent Station, NJ



DIA planning commission and board work to set the welcoming, prayerful, playful atmosphere.



An important word with our keynoter.



Let's see how many artists this elevator can hold.



Meeting new members.

How does this apple core and this photo affect our lives as artist preachers?



How does the art of a different culture affect us?



It's all about the contemplative artists' collective memory of Paradise.



We are blessing to one another and to the world.



Something to Think About

1 It was an awesome experience to be at the board member nominations. Though attendance was somewhat low, we experienced a good number of members willing to serve. What good and gracious souls we are when it comes to willingness to serve the DIA.

Since we will nominate again for this coming year, please be thinking about your own ability to serve or to at least nominate. The board will name a member to head the Nominations Committee in the near future.

2 The Planning Commission for next summer is looking to you for help. This past

Gathering offered wonderful raffle items such as stitchery, knitted scarves, books authored by artists, stained glass mandalas, framed photographs, sculpture, handmade cards, paintings, sewn pillows and much more. So, whether it is a raffle or a silent auction, all of the above would be most appropriate to receive. Contact information will be out to you soon via the Update.

3 Do you know a bookstore director who would be willing to sell DIA designed shoulder bags to help us in our fundraising efforts? If so, contact Liz Sully OP at Sullyop@aol.com or 404-733-6594.

THANK YOU

Artists unplugged !



FEATURE: THE ARTIST AS PREACHER

Elizabeth Michael Boyle OP

It was at the Sparkill Gathering five years ago that I encountered Thoma's fabric painting of Fra Angelico. I was struck by the fact that she chose to depict the artist in communion with Mary alone before the angel took over the scene. It preached to me of the moment of prayer involved in a work of art.



Annunciations

*Before each moment art can capture
comes a greater moment unrecorded.
Before the Word takes form
in wood, or stone, or pigment,
a flashing second taunts the sight
with stunning recognition--then retreats
leaving the soul to make a shape for longing.*

*Before his Virgin heard the angel's voice
this artist heard a different voice speak color:
the air around her head chimed gold—
and waited
while her breathing stilled the rush
of alien wings.
And when she simply looked at him
all six colors on his palette
chorused vibrant white.*

*Before he mixed the sand with lime
and raised his sturdy trowel to
smooth the frescoed surface
for the stroke of one reluctant brush
their gaze
carved art's penultimate vision
into a space so sacred
no angel dared intrude.*

Poem by Elizabeth Michael Boyle OP
Fabric painting by Thoma Swanson OP

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WISE WORDS FROM THE ARTISTS

Quotations from Kathleen Deignan's presentations,
*"The Sweet Songs of Living Things;
the Contemplative Artist and the Recovery of Paradise"*

Out of the energy of praise
— no matter the form of our art —
we create.

I can imagine no more important,
and dare I say urgent, conversation for the soul of our species
and for safe-guarding the beauty of our planet
than the one we have come to entertain regarding the role of the
contemplative artist in the recovery of Paradise.

The ground of the Paradise Mind is, of course, silence, stillness,
self emptying, where the contemplative gardener prunes and
fertilizes a rich soul-field so that it might
bear much fruit for the nurture of all.

We wander far from home, east of Eden,
but some of us remember the way back.
It is the artist who remembers our original name
and this forsaken original country most vividly.
It is the artist who remembers the songs of Eden,
hears them resounding in the echo chamber of the soul.

There are many portals of entry into the Paradise Mind
which is the contemplative artist's true home.