



Searching for truth and beauty, preaching through the transforming power of the arts

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Columbus Gathering Captures “Triple Crown”

Assembled August 1-3, 2013 in the Martin De Porres Center on the campus of Ohio Dominican University, DIA artists enjoyed an aesthetic immersion that Chairman, Pat Daly summarized: “It feels like we just won the Triple Crown!” Two celebrated African-American artists from Columbus provided the first two “crowns” as they involved participants in interactive presentations at the Center and in their respective galleries. The final crown, a rousing concert by the choir of St. Thomas the Apostle Church, brought the audience to its feet in a prolonged ovation. The program which began with a Ugandan hymn—accompanied by keyboard, tambourine, rain-stick, and multiple drums, ranged through Gospel, Gregorian, country, and folk selections, and concluded with the Dominican “Magnificat.” Festive refreshments hosted by the Dominican Sisters of Peace “crowned” the concluding event.

De Porres Center offered an ideal setting for artistic activity; in addition to the stunning multicultural artifacts in the Dominican Sisters’ of Peace permanent collection, the Center’s meeting space surrounded participants with “Unlocked,” a special exhibit by artists of The Open Door, an organization which provides

instruction and art therapy for the physically and mentally challenged. The same space accommodated workshops by Pat Daly, Barbara Kukla, and Mary Pat Reid in photography, art therapy, and clay sculpture, respectively. In the same space, the traditional DIA Marketplace and Virtual Gallery exhibited members’ work.

2013 Gathering Embraces Multicultural Outreach

Although both presenters were African-American women based in Columbus, the two artists who headlined the 17th Annual DIA Gathering, Queen E. Brooks and Aminah L. Robinson, represented totally different artistic and personal approaches. From the first moment of her opening keynote, Queen E. Brooks entranced those in attendance by the warmth and wit of her engaging presentation style. In her words and in her works, she vividly demonstrated the theme of this year’s event: “Art from the Heart.” Each projected image accompanying her address could have been entitled “a faith-based initiative,” as Queen expressed her Christian faith using a variety of media: watercolor, acrylic, wood burning, paper weaving, oil pastel, colored pencil. Queen describes herself as an “intuitive creator” who eliminates preliminary sketching and dives right

into her materials. She draws inspiration for her chiefly abstract works from biblical texts and personal emotions and interprets these in designs drawn from African and Native-American symbolism.

Throughout her talk, Queen reiterated a sentiment familiar to DIA members: joyful gratitude for the gift of art as a divine vocation and an opportunity to devote her life to God's glory. In addition to her talk, the artist opened her home to a group of DIA members to meet her works "in person" and explore the astounding variety of artifacts in her studio/gallery. Night after night, Queen returned to the Gathering to contribute to Coffee House hilarity, to join in dancing led by Xiamara Mendez-Hernandez, OP and to enjoy the multi-racial concert.

The other featured artist, Aminah L. Robinson, although reclusive by reputation, also gave herself generously to the Gathering. Aminah's work can be described as symbolic narrative, for she has devoted her entire artistic oeuvre to preserving the historical heritage of the African-American people. Aminah's dialog with DIA artists took place at the Hammond Harkness Gallery currently featuring her exhibit: "From Blackberry Patch to Poindexter Village." Her conversation wove commentary on the exhibit with a personal story even more remarkable than her art.

Born in 1940 into a segregated neighborhood of "working poor," Aminah did not speak until she was eight years old. Providentially, her vocation as an artist began when her father engaged her in a unique form of conversation: "What do you see?" he would ask. And the mute child would respond by drawing a picture.

"What do you feel?" he would continue, and she would embellish the drawing with evocative detail. Although Aminah did not talk, she listened intently to the stories of her elders. In addition, she pored over hundreds of journals and note books which supplied materials for her symbolic documentaries. These became the basis for a career devoted to the philosophy of *Sokofa*:

"Understanding the past to create a future." Many of Aminah's paintings, quilts, and weavings illustrate the history of African-American neighborhoods, many of which have disappeared.

From her mother, Aminah learned how to sew and quilt and to create beauty out of fabric scraps and "found objects." Today her mother's legacy is preserved in multi-media pieces which combine paint, fabric, and her signature buttons. Aminah's commitment to creative inventiveness also characterized her teaching style when she was employed in a program for disabled children. "If you can't use your hands, use your feet," she would challenge them. To the reluctant student who complained, "I don't have a pencil," she would command: "Bring me some twigs and we'll make charcoal."

Today Aminah Robinson's resume includes major exhibits in galleries throughout the United States and a series of unique children's books. Her biography is available in a richly illustrated book "Symphonique Poem." Following the artist's example, DIA artists spent an afternoon creating artworks out of an assortment of sixty different "found objects" assembled by the indefatigable Pat Daly.





2013 Fra Angelico Award

At the Gathering's concluding liturgy, out-going President, Mary Fran Gorman, OP announced the winner of the 2013 Fra Angelico Award: Barbara Schwarz, OP of Amityville. A long-time member of DIA and a past president, Barbara attributes her own recovery from viral encephalitis to the healing power of the arts. Barbara works in a variety of media: wood, clay, acrylics, water color, photography, video, computer graphics. She routinely places her talents at the service of others by designing reflection booklets, graphics, and websites for her congregation's programs and those of the Northeast collaboration. She has given retreats integrating the arts and spirituality.



In 2012, her abstract paintings inspired by hurricane Sandy expressed the emotions of many New York victims. In recent years, Barbara has poured her creative energies into inspiring young preachers at the annual National Dominican High Schools and College Preaching Conferences. Presenting the award, Mary Fran Gorman stated: "Barbara Schwarz uses the many gifts she has been given clearly, freely, and liberally sharing her vision that recognizes the power of art to preach the gospel, comfort those in need, and encourage us to be the best we can be." Barbara maintains an online gallery and marketplace for her work: www.artafire.homestead.com.

The Board also recognized three members for outstanding service to the organization with "Spirit of the DIA" Awards: Colleen Gallagher, OP, and Thoma Swanson, OP (Dominican Sisters of Peace) and Janet Wright, OP (Adrian).

Annual Board Business Meeting & Election



As reported by Mary Fran Gorman, 2012-13 proved an exceptionally challenging year for the DIA Executive Board. By the time of the Gathering, all but three of its members had resigned because of illness and /or competing responsibilities to family or ministry. Therefore, those in attendance at Columbus were gratefully elated when six members accepted nomination to the Board. Janet Wright swiftly proposed election by acclamation, and the newly-elected slate completed the process by choosing officers and terms: President, Barbara Schwarz (Amityville) Vice-President, Pat Daly (Peace), Secretary, Mary Pat Reid (Caldwell), Treasurer, Jeanne Stickling (Adrian), Elaine Taylor, whose term has not expired, did not need to be reaffirmed by the membership. Membership at Large: Rudolph Lowenstein (English Province) and Gail Bogdanovich (Racine).

Mary Fran then directed those present to form table groups for discussion of the perennial questions: How can we increase membership? Who would bring new energies to the Gathering, and how should we go about recruiting them? Following a lengthy discussion, the members approved two proposals: that two of the Dominican Youth Movement be invited to the 2014 Gathering on work scholarship and that the matter of membership be taken up by the board. (The next Board meeting is October 25-27 in Racine.

Among suggestions to the Board for action during the coming year, members stressed that: the DIA webpage should be kept current by featuring the work of many different artists and, the possible use of Facebook. As she assumed leadership, newly-elected President Barbara Schwarz commented on these recommendations and seized the opportunity to point out that it is the responsibility of members and not of the webpage manager, Carol O'Connor, nor of newsletter editor, Elizabeth Michael Boyle, to pursue members for content for their publications. People need to send information about their shows, events and new works.



The Artist as Preacher: An Interview with Jeanne Stickling

In each issue during recent years, this page has featured a meditation by a DIA artist reflecting on how a chosen artifact preaches to her. For this issue, we have invited an artist to share her experience of how the physical material of her chosen genre preaches to her. This communication usually occurs during the process of creating when each artist seems to enter into a relationship with her medium. Moreover, this relationship seems especially intimate with those who have chosen to create with clay. In an interview at the Ohio gathering, we asked DIA potter Jeanne Stickling to comment on her lifetime relationship with clay. As a student, Jeanne had studied painting, drawing, and other media, of course, but it was clay that seemed to speak her name and, not surprisingly, Jeanne's first important sculpted piece was a head of St. Dominic.

"The relationship begins with the preparation of the clay. A long kneading process is required to expel all air bubbles, smooth out lumps, and transform the raw earth into the desired consistency. When it reaches this condition, the artist declares the clay *mature*. You *knead* it like dough for bread and then roll it out like pie crust or *throw* it on a potter's wheel. Regardless of the

image you're sculpting or the vessel you're spinning, the main task of the potter is *centering*. Spiritually, centering amounts to getting your life focused on *essence*.

"The final stage of creating with clay is also rich in spiritual symbolism. When the desired figure or vessel is complete, the piece is ready to be fired. Now the artist's craft meets its greatest challenge. If there's a hidden air bubble or if the clay has been contaminated by plaster in the ambient atmosphere, the piece will fracture in the heat and even destroy the entire work.

"I believe that working with clay can bring you into contact with the sacred. Your hands touch and grasp all four of the essential elements of Creation: earth, water, air, fire. For a Dominican artist, working with clay becomes a tactile *centering prayer*."



We are Happy to Announce

Brigid Bray OP of
Mission San Jose Won
Second Prize

At the Olive Hyde Art
Gallery in Fremont, CA.

She won for a picture
of the Mission.

Mark Your Calendars:

Next DIA Gathering is in Adrian, Michigan
from July 23 to July 26 2014

Plan to Attend! More Information to come!





What does DIA mean to me?

I see this as another way of entering into contemplation to bring forth the beauty that is inside of us in our art expression and the way we preach.

- Germaine Hietpas OP

DIA is a chance to meet other Dominican Artists-- other people who believe that preaching can be done through art. Not always being secure in my art to having real artists say it is really good stuff, and the support, and what I have learned that help me do better. The way we incorporate art and preaching and being with each other celebrating it has always been a joy and I need it as a little extra shot in the arm every year.

— Mary Fran Gorman OP

It gives us a chance to exchange ideas of preaching through art as Dominican women and men. It is very important!

- Gayle Bogdanowitz OP

It gives the opportunity for artists to talk to other artists for support.

-Bernadine Egleston OP

I'm an art therapist and I am happy to be here at the DIA. I love to get to know the other sisters from other communities and that is why I am here. - Barbara Kukla OP
DIA means a support network where we can not only get support but give it to each other. We get encouragement in our art forms and get views from people who don't have the same art as us but it gives us a different pair of eyes which is quite valuable.

— Rudolf Lowenstein OP

The DIA is an avenue for religious artists particularly Dominican sisters, fathers to be able to have an avenue to present their art to the world and gives one an incentive to keep on going.

— Elizabeth Slenker OP

When I say where I am going I say the Dominican Institute for the arts. It is a grand association. They are all loving and I can't get over how talented you all are. I am interested in art and I am learning from that. I am starting to appreciate different art from what I do and then I learn what you do and it brings it all together. — Brigid Bray OP

Dominican Institute for the Arts means an Organization, a group that gets together to show appreciation for and to experience aspects of art that are so fantastic . whether it is music or color or it's just so great all the way through. Mary Ellen Paulson OP

(What does DIA means to me continued)

I love coming to DIA. It's a cast of characters. We sit and talk with the craziest people. I love it. — Janet Wright OP

DIA gives me the opportunity to share my art and to be with other artists. Since we have had so many gatherings it is fun to see friends again and to see what other people are doing and to share our experience. I think a picture or any kind of image is worth a thousand words . I really wish it was more recognized within the religious tradition. — Janice Holkup OP

You get to see all the things that people are doing and have improved on in the arts. And it is support for the Dominican way of life. — Mary Irene Walker OP

Means together sharing the different arts that we engage in. — Judith Smith OPA

Artists are brothers and sisters in the Dominican Order and it means I have enough wonderful spirit to continue preaching through the arts. — Mary Pat Reid OP

DIA brings me life: spiritually, emotionally, - so I can continue to photograph throughout the year! - Pat Daly OPA

It means meeting all my friends again—my old friends, my new friends and having a wonderful time sharing the art of these amazing incredible artists who come from all over to share in the pleasures of the DIA. — Pat Lee OP

I think it is really great because of all of the sisters we meet. Then the ones who don't come are missing and praying for us. Instead of doing papers and books they are doing incredible art pieces. — Rosaire McAuliffe OP

I think the DIA is particularly appropriate for Dominicans for we are using the creativity which God has shared with us to talk about God. Because what we make is basically a reflection of his word, his goodness, his generosity to us and by using our creativity to make art for other people, ourselves or decoration we are preaching. There are so many ways that our creativity which is a gift of God can advance our ideas, our way of life, our vocations. The DIA gives us a wide opportunity to do this with others.

— Thoma Swanson OP

I enjoy coming to all the DIA meetings because I enjoy all the sisters. We create together. We enjoy together. We really are sisters. — Alice Van Acker OP



It's a learning process- meeting so many wonderful artists and watching and learning their work which inspired me to do what I can possibly do in my ministry to support their arts. Every year when I leave DIA there's a big display that goes up in Sparkill to show everyone else what the sisters, brothers, priests and associates from all over have been doing.. And so I feel I give great honor to them. -Ann Eigenbauer OP



Reflections from the President

Clearly we can be proud of the gathering in Columbus. We give thanks for our planning commission and all its work on our behalf as well as the Dominican Sisters of Peace and Ohio Dominican.

We heard loud and clear the connections between our Dominican Spirituality, our art as preaching, and our support of each other. It was clear in responses to Thoma Swanson OP and Pat Daly from Aminah Robinson who wrote "I cannot tell you how profoundly moved I was by the humanity and spirituality of the Dominican Institute for the arts people! Thank you for inviting me to be a part of your wonderful family of artists. The day was pure bliss---I loved it! ...My gratitude and thanks extend to each person of the DIA---for the donated materials and for your shared gifts and kindnesses to me as we continue to humble our lives to God." An all the people I these pages, and Mary Ellen Paulsen who wrote: "DIA is truly great. We are preaching through the Arts, spreading beauty everywhere: Verbal nonverbal- all parts?"

The Gathering also raised a number of questions, many of which were in the Winter Issue of OPPalette in the article by Mary Fran: the perennial questions of membership, finances, how we are preaching, and outreach to the larger Dominican Family. At the end of October there is a board meeting in Racine and I can assure you that those issues will be addressed and many will be brought back to you. Where there will be constitutional issues or votes by membership there will be input and vote. So if your membership has lapsed consider what DIA means to you. You have seen on these pages what DIA means to many members present in Columbus. Our costs for board, communications, website and scholarships continue whether you are able to attend the gathering or not. We are more than a gathering. **WE ARE A PREACHING!**

Visibility is important. What are the ways your work has furthered the preaching of Justice, Peace and all of Creation? Often we are called upon to do work to further causes, programs and the needs of the poor. If you have done some work in that regard please send a photo of the work, the poem, or photo of an opening and its story to Elizabeth Michael Boyle (emichael@caldwell.edu) We need your input in newsletters and on the website. For the website, www.diarts.org, send your artwork in jpeg format, title and your name to Carol O'Connor. (COconnor@columbusdominicans.org). Right now there are some glitches which are being addressed when then are fixed we will send you more info.

Collaboration is a hallmark of Dominican Life. These days the Dominican Sisters Conference is planning local gatherings. See how you can help in these events. Also whenever you market your work especially at Dominican Gatherings if you can display the DIA logo and encourage people to ask you about it. Your word of mouth invites new members.



The Dominican Institute for the Arts is a grass roots collaboration of Dominican sisters, friars, associates and laity to further the preaching through the arts.

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