



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

**Volume 26, Number 1 – Winter 2024 – [www.diartsop.org](http://www.diartsop.org)**



## ***DIA Founding Member Honored for Service to Aquinas College Community***

*Submitted to DIA for newsletter by Sr. Mary Navarre, OP — November 1, 2023*

**Sr. Phyllis Mrozinski** was inducted into the Aquinas College Hall of Fame on September 14, 2023. This annual award honors a member of the Aquinas



College community whose service to the College has been beyond expectations. Members of the DIA who remember Sr. Phyllis as one of its founders and a lifelong, vibrant member, will not be surprised.

Like many Sisters, Phyllis served her congregation wherever she was needed – teaching, administration, and formation ministries to name just a few. Her heart, however, was never far from her love for art in all its forms. Finally, when she was fifty-five years old, she was given the space and time to pursue art through formal study in the BFA program offered by Aquinas College. And what a blessing it was!

One of her instructors recognized her talent and encouraged her to major in sculpture. She did, and with astonishing outcomes. She sculpted a life-size image of St. Thomas Aquinas which is installed in the main Academic Building of the campus. Many student hands have touched the hand of St. Thomas to encourage and calm them as they approached a looming exam!

Phyllis also designed the beautiful Fra Angelico Award given to an outstanding member of the DIA each year at the annual conference. Sr. Phyllis received this award, herself, in 2006.



In 1994, Sister Phyllis became a full-time artist at the Marywood Motherhouse. She constructed a studio in a remote corner of the basement. There visitors were welcomed and observed Sr. Phyllis' usually serious demeanor transformed into an exuberant artist at work. There she created art pieces in stone, alabaster, marble, and clay models for bronze casting. Some of these include a life-



sr. Phyllis at work in her studio  
sized sculpture of St. Dominic, complete with torch bearing dog, now on the Marywood campus grounds. Smaller, and no less lovely works of art, e.g., sculptures, drawings, watercolors, and other media adorn the halls and sacred spaces at the new Marywood Motherhouse in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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## President's Message

In my kitchen, the table and chairs are next to a large bow window. Recently, while reading the Boston Globe and savoring my first cup of coffee, I noticed movement out of the corner of my eye. On looking up, all that I could see



was the end of a white tail deer. Going to the door, I slowly opened the inner one and there not fifteen feet away, standing still as a statue, was a six-point buck. Yesterday, there have been several doe in the yard. Since it is mating season. I was pretty sure that this buck was not interested in either the berries on the bush or the acorns on the ground.

At this point, the view I had of the buck was a side one, but he must have perceived my presence because he turned his head to face me and then turned his whole body in my direction. What happened next continues to amaze me. Cautiously, step by step, the buck began walking towards me until he was less than three feet away. Afraid that he would run away, I stood frozen in place. After a few minutes of our staring at each other, the buck turned and sauntered into the woods. On closing the door, I realized I had a huge smile on my face.

By now, the coffee was cold so I made a new cup and settled down to continue reading the paper, but I couldn't concentrate. My mind kept wandering back to that buck. Instinct tells a deer to run when encountering humans. For whatever reason, that buck did not. He broke the rules, listened to his gut and took a chance. If he had not, I never would have experienced that glorious encounter.

What about us and our art? All of our art forms have rules/guidelines (the dos and don'ts). What would happen if we broke the rules, went with our gut and took a chance? If we don't like the result, the piece can be destroyed, or we might be pleasantly surprised.

Take care of yourselves and be well.

Peace,

*Pat*



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## Christmas Memories and Musings

**Laura Law, Adrian Dominican Associate, St. Louis, Missouri**

My first child, Christen, was born on Christmas Eve, 1986. She was born in the hospital where my husband and I had met and worked. We were surrounded by friends and family and the hospital was decorated for Christmas inside and out. If ever a birth could be considered “romantic,” this was it! When it came time to bring Christen home, the

nursing staff brought her out to me dressed in a Christmas stocking. My heart melted—and continues to melt each time I look at the photo of us. This year, I decided to paint that picture. I used a round, 12 inch stretched canvas and acrylic paint. The original stocking she wore hangs under the painting. She was the best stocking stuffer that I ever had!



**Sr. Barbara Schwarz, OP**

This Jesse Tree of the Cosmic Christ is a video created by Sr. Barbara Schwarz, OP. In 2000 she has revised it in 2023 in this time of Laudato Si, Barbara states:



The Jesse Tree is an Advent custom of placing ornaments of the lineage of Jesus with prayers on a tree each day. It begins with Adam and Eve and culminates at the celebration of Christmas. Barbara uses handmade ornaments, descriptions, and prayers.

With a new understanding of the Creation may we realize our origins go back to the dawning of the Universe. The sense of the Cosmic Christ coming again in glory defines the Jesse Tree. Barbara offers this as preparation for Christ's coming.

**Nancyann Turner, OP**

### **BLESS THE WORK OF OUR HANDS**

Daily our community of Dominican Sisters shares Morning Prayer. A favorite psalm that occurs periodically includes the refrain: ‘Bless the work of our hands.’ (Psalm 90)

I was thinking of this psalm recently as our mother's group used their hands to create beautiful Christmas wreaths for their front doors. Clearly,

having limited resources did not diminish their enthusiastic creativity. Is there not an urge in each of us to create something beautiful—the work of our hands!

Several days later, our children had a Christmas cookie workshop. Again, it was moving to watch their delight in cutting out cookies and adding mountains of icing and sugar sprinkles—the work of their hands.

Truly, I believe we give birth when we give—when we create with our hands. This Christmas, this New Year—bless the work of our hands over and over!!!

### **ART AND MUSIC: CHRISTMAS IN THE CITY**

“It had been a tough year in Detroit. Residents in the neighborhoods surrounding the Capuchin Soup Kitchen had long been living in darkness at night, the streetlights having ceased functioning years ago. They had become accustomed to residing next door to burned out, abandoned houses, decaying, silent factories. They have had to learn survival skills, how to negotiate dangerous, violent streets and drug-infested tenements.

But 2023 brought even additional challenges. The extraordinarily high number of Covid deaths in Detroit still casts a long shadow over the future. High grocery costs, food insecurity and water shutoffs on a massive scale heightened misery for thousands of families already living in grinding poverty.

Yet, the women’s support group at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen still meets weekly. Each meeting, the twelve women share art, express feelings, offer prayer and close with music. The art can be deeply

personal therapy such as expressing an angry moment and calming oneself down; It could be a Christmas card made for each of their children...no matter. Art offers an outlet and a healing.

The same with music...all chatter and gossip cease as women join in a song...The last meeting was especially heavy as the son of one of the mothers had just died of a drug overdose. It was thus burdened with heaviness that I stepped into a women’s support group meeting at the Conner kitchen last Thursday. It was their last meeting before Christmas, and the ten women present were just forming a circle for the prayer. I clasped the hands of the two on either side of me and joined in the singing of “Silent Night” as the candlelight flickered on the faces of those ten women. Women whose lives were scarred by domestic violence. Women who had lost sons to the lure of the streets. Women who struggled daily to put food on the table for their children.

And yet their voices rang out with joy; their faces reflected hope; their demeanor shouted out that they are not alone. More powerfully than any sermon they conveyed the conviction that truly God has come to dwell among the people.

**In the houses of the rich, In the shelters of the poor,  
In the hope of the unemployed, In the presence of each other,  
Jesus dwells among us all.  
Christmas Blessings!**



*(Continued from page 1)*

Sr. Phyllis’ favorite quote from Scripture is, likewise, no surprise: “For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.” (Eph. 2:10) On July 23, 2017, Sr. Phyllis, God’s own work of art, was welcomed into Paradise leaving behind a legacy of vibrant, clear, and beautiful works.



## *In the News!*

### **Heidi Erdmann, OPA**

As a Tacoma Dominican Associate, I feel like my work has been guided by Spirit. About two years ago I was welcomed into my friend's studio, and we have been painting together weekly ever since. This Spring, I had a "give away" of twenty-one of my pictures at St. Joseph's Residence (SJR) in West Seattle, where most of our elderly Sisters live. It was a blessing to see the Sisters select a painting for their room. I took a picture of each one, as I didn't want to forget their smiles!

In October, I was invited to exhibit my work at Providence Mount St. Vincent Care Facility, which borders SJR. Twenty-seven of my paintings were



on exhibit for the month. I discussed the meaning of my work at a reception with some of the Assisted Living residents on October 25th and

included a quote from Thomas Aquinas in my presentation, which I found in the DIA newsletter: "The same Spirit who hovered over the waters at the beginning of creation hovers over the mind of the artist at work."

One resident commented on how thankful she was that I included my spirituality in the description of my art process.



Also in October, my studio partner and I participated in a two-day Studio Art Tour. It was great to interact with so many local art enthusiasts, including children.

I am grateful for the inspiration of the Dominican Institute of the Arts community. I read all your newsletters and emails. Maybe someday we will meet in person.

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### **Joann Daley, O.P: Montana Remembered**

October 3, 2023-January 20, 2024

This exhibition comprises three series of prints and collages made by Joann Daley, O.P. between 1969 to 1988. O.P. comes from the Latin *ordo praedicatorum*, which translates to Order of Preachers, recognition of Daley's commitment as a Dominican sister. Like other Montana Modernists, Daley depicted her world without nostalgia or idealism and influenced the next generation through teaching and community building. This exhibition reflects the artist's close connections to



people and places in Montana and documents the changing social landscape that followed the demise of the Anaconda Company.

Daley grew up in on a farm in Wisconsin and moved to Anaconda in 1969 to teach in the Catholic high school. She founded and directed Anaconda's Copper Village Museum and Arts Center, and then worked for the Montana Arts Council, helping small communities identify, connect, celebrate, and grow their cultural assets. She returned to Anaconda in 1985 after seven years studying art in Italy. Throughout her career as an artist and as a Dominican sister, engaging communities has been central to her creative practice.

Using media including sculpture, drawing, lithography, etching, and collage, Daley chronicled the particularities, personalities, and quirky beauty of Montana's people, architecture, celebrations, and landscapes—seeing as an outsider, yet immersed in the daily life of the community. Her work reveals essential but often overlooked details of place—from workers changing shift at the Anaconda smelter to Marcus Daly's Montana Hotel from the frescos and ornate grillwork of the

Washoe Theater to Hi-line grain elevators. Daley believes that "the ordinary things of life deserve to be seen" and considers it part of her mission as an artist to see and re-present things that are so commonplace as to go unnoticed.

While living in Anaconda, Daley gained access to the smelter, where she recorded the horrific beauty of the 19th-century machinery and the hardship and dignified strength of the people who flowed through the gates in daily shifts. While working for the Montana Arts Council she made a series of prints documenting the long highways and rural communities she visited. In the 1980s, Daley's practice increasingly shifted from printmaking to collage. She discovered that by re-combining elements from her prints, she could connect disparate images and ideas across time, dispense with traditional perspective, and better communicate the spirit of a place. This exhibition was curated by Susan Floyd Barnett, organized by the Missoula Art Museum, and travels under the auspices of the Montana Art Gallery Directors Association (MAGDA)

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## Jean Donnelly, Amityville Associate

I painted this icon of St. John the Baptist this year.

Once I decide who I will paint I visit one of the reference librarians at my local library searching for books or commentaries about that saint.

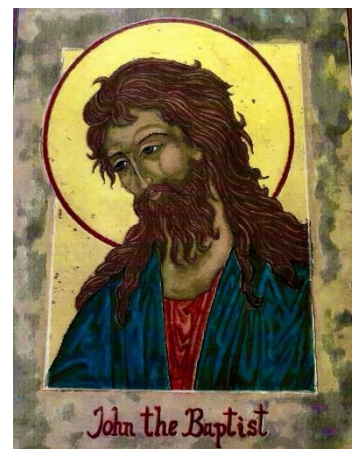
I spend several weeks reading to discover their journey, their connection to Jesus and their response to that connection. All of that will inform my painting, sometimes radically changing my preconceived notion of who that person was and how they navigated their place in the world.

John the Baptist is a case in point. Much of what I read questions the image of the wild man in the desert.

I take notes while I'm reading and compile a statement that encapsulates who I think that person was.

I don't paint an icon unless I have done the research that helps me to know this person. I invite these people who really lived to be present to me through the months of painting. We have a dialogue.

I hope that gives you an inkling of my process.



## Joe Kilkevelich, OP

Glance at the sun.

See the moon and the stars.

Gaze at the beauty of earth's greenings.

Now, think.

What delight God gives to humankind  
with all these things.

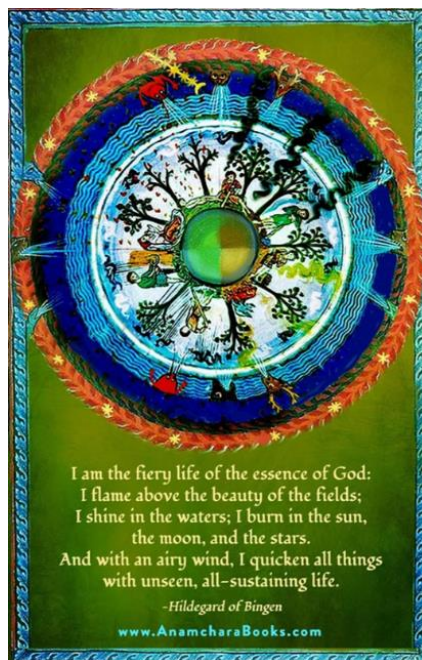
All nature is at the disposal of humankind.

We are to work with it.

For without we cannot survive.

Hildegard of Bingen

This tapestry was inspired by the work of Hildegard of Bingen. She was a 12<sup>th</sup> Century mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, also known as Saint Hildegard and the Sibyl of the Rhine. She was a German Benedictine abbess of a



monastery housing both women and men. She was a person of wide-ranging knowledge and learning. Noted for her many skills she was an active writer, composed amazing music, illuminated manuscripts, and wrote poetry. She was also a philosopher, mystic, visionary, and a medical writer and practitioner. She was an herbologist who grew healing plants during the High Middle Ages.

## Ms. Mary Reinhardt, OP Lay Dominican, St. Albert the Great Central Province

### My latest Discipline in the Arts: French Horn

I am a French horn player! That has only been for six weeks, and my horn teacher has been out sick for two of those, but I figure practicing counts.

I have long been enamored with the visual and auditory beauty of the French horn but could never justify buying one. After our DIA gathering this past July, though, I was inspired and ordered a French horn from a brass instrument manufacturer in England.

As I waited for my horn to be built and shipped, I bought a French horn mouthpiece to practice lip vibration. (Who knew that the haunting themes from *Star Wars* came from spitting into a metal tube?)

Lip buzzing came naturally to me. My grandfather was a three fingered trumpet-banjo player in a Dixieland jazz band. In sixth grade, I inherited his trumpet and played it in school band.

Biding my time until the horn arrived, I practiced buzzing my lips with my rescue dog Dominic lounging nearby. Every time my lips buzzed successfully, he

startled and stared at me wondering, "What is wrong with you, woman?"

Finally, my horn arrived. I did not expect anything when I first tried to make sound, but wham, bam, and out of the blue, I played a note immediately. So, off to the music teacher I went.

I have made progress. Initially, I sounded like a dying elephant. From there, I progressed to really bad. Lately, I have been playing *Panis Angelicus* ... just not how Thomas Aquinas wanted it to sound.

Through all this, little Dominic amazes me. While listening to my other-worldly French horn sounds, he just lays in his bed and listens peacefully as I practice. My last dog would run away whenever I played the piano or guitar. I hope Dominic does not think that a French horn hangout with me is the price he must pay for a warm bed and a full belly.



## Sister Irene Mary Diones, OP –Dominican Sister of Mission San Jose

### FOUR SEASONS MURAL

One of the blessings after my summer retreat was to resume the 260 square feet mural work that I started



early in June. This project a deep, serious consideration of time, considering ministerial commitments and personal self-evaluation concerning my physical capabilities. I knew could do it and said yes despite the precarious conditions upon which I would paint the mural.

This is my fourth mural, but this one I am doing independently. Why the theme of Four Seasons? I was drawn to obvious reasons where I stand, walk, and live daily. This is in our Motherhouse grounds. The location is encircled by the inevitable beauty of creation; a community garden with plots of vegetables and cornfields, fruit-bearing trees, and flowering plants. The early morning sun rising over rolling Mission hills, olive trees, home bee hives, a meditative desert-rock garden, strolling turkeys and friendly deer, hawks and eagles hovering over, birds tweeting day and night, and hummingbirds in their speedy flights. The overgrown ivy-covered cinder blocks were cleared, the cracks smoothed.

Images of Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer gradually replaced the once aged and barren wall within a three-month period of painting cyclically from sunrise to sunset. I had regular visits from friendly four-legged creatures whose presence was welcomed as I set about the design and included them into it.

The warm touch of a new day was inviting, but as the morning sun spread its rays of prism in soft colors, the temperature gradually rose to a 3-digit temperature by midday in its blazing heat.

As the day passed it gradually faded and shifted to an amazingly rich, bold, and brilliant sunset accentuated by the reflections over the waters of San Francisco Bay. The inspiration and manifestation of God's presence working within me and guided me. I could only attempt and prayerfully hope to capture within my human gifts and limitations the beauty of the seasons each passing day. Every day, each stroke of the brush and dabs of paints were small steps from visualizing and forming an image to becoming something whole of what I had envisioned.



On September 30, the painting was completed and glazed. An inscription on a rock I dated and affixed my signature stated: **“Lord of Creation, Author of Life and Beauty, Giver of Gifts, Maker of Four Seasons, to You Be Praise, Glory, and Thanks.”**

To complete the gift of this endeavor, especially conceived and rendered in honor of, and with gratitude to our garden volunteers, this mural was

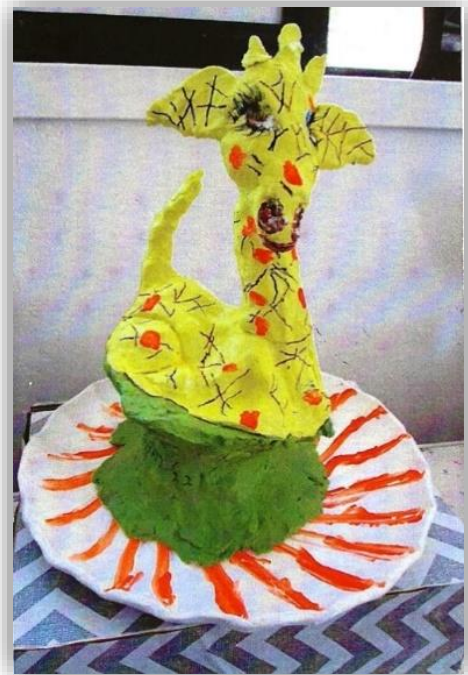
blessed on October 5, 2023. A number of sisters, volunteers, and lay colleagues attended the blessing with hymns and a litany of praise glory, honor, and thanks. **“And God looked and saw that all He had made was good... very, very good.”** And, we too have seen that what we made indeed was very good in

God’s eyes! In this, we have become God’s co-creator. We become one with the earth and all living creatures. For indeed, we are **“ONE Ohana-ONE Family in this garden of creation”** as the hymn echoes. I preach God’s word through my art.



### Sr. Brigid Bray, OP

Sr. Brigid Bray has tried her hand at three-dimensional work. She presents her accomplishments of Elly the Elephant, and Jerry the Giraffe. There are more in her series, and these represent her newfound love of working in the round.



## ***2024 DIA Gathering – July 22-25***

**Weber Retreat and Conference Center**

**Adrian, Michigan**



### ***Keynote Speaker – Sr. Joye Gros, OP***



This is an introduction to our Keynote Speaker for the 2024 Gathering. Many of you might know Sr. Joye Gros, OP, Dominican Sister of Peace. She was one of the key figures in the formation of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. She held leadership positions in the Kentucky Dominicans for thirteen years. She also was a co-director at the Collaborative Dominican Novitiate in St. Louis for eight years. Presently she facilitates the work of religious congregations who are considering ways to best plan for the future. Sr. Joye has worked in watercolor and created a body of nature scenery.



### ***Preparation for the 2024 Gathering***

People suggested in their evaluations to have an “old fashioned Coffee House” instead of outside entertainment. This year there will be a Coffee House at the Gala, so get your act together if you wish to be part of the entertainment.

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