Portraits are artistic representations of a person, in which the face and expression predominates. Portraits historically have been used to display wealth and power, but also to communicate the mood and personality of subjects.

How does one create a portrait of an entire community?

In a way, an art museum is like a portrait of a community. The images on walls and in the archives represent the values of the community—these are the things that the community has found worthy of preserving and sharing. The Rahr-West Art Museum has served as a place to view art, including portraits, in Manitowoc since 1975. Like many museums, however, the collection and exhibition programs do not always reflect the actual diversity of a community.

The Portrait of Manitowoc Project recognizes that discrepancy and strives to create a diverse portrait of Manitowoc in the massively impactful year we are in, 2020. Artist Sonia Vasquez will be painting Manitowoc County residents of different backgrounds to ensure a diverse selection of community members are included in the final installation. Community members and artists are invited to participate by creating their own self-portraits. This project explores how our community sees itself and how individuals feel about their identities as citizens of Manitowoc.

The size of the individual works is taken from the simple postcard—a 4x6 inch piece of paper we use to capture a snapshot and a bit about ourselves. The final product will present a large-scale installation with hundreds, perhaps thousands of portraits of Manitowoc; some painted by Vasquez, others contributed by community members.

Representation matters. As a member of our community, make sure you represent in this project. Participate!

Instructions and participation information can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

This project is generously funded by

Art Bridges

Sonia Vasquez, a native of Manitowoc, has a Bachelor’s of Fine Art from the University of Milwaukee-Wisconsin in painting and drawing. Sonia has become increasingly interested in classical painting and drawing since she was in her teens, often referencing the old masters as inspiration. More information on Sonia and her work can be found at www.soniavasquezart.com.
In Memoriam & Donations

Rahr-West Charitable Foundation
Catherine Cole
Bess & Milton Schwartz Donor Advised Fund

In Memory of Linda White
Robert & Debbie Bonk

In Memory of Marian Nikolai
Gail & Jerome Fox
Joan Merkel

In Memory of Josie Theyerl
Robert & Debbie Bonk

Education Thank You
Joanna Bare

Rahr-West Face Masks

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world as we know it. Things that didn’t require a lot of thought, like going to the grocery store, have become tasks that require some planning to keep everyone safe.

To show our appreciation and to support our members through these unprecedented times, the Friends of the Rahr-West Art Museum developed a plan to order reusable, washable masks for our members. These masks depict the sculpture located outside the museum “Late for a Date”. Members will be able to receive one free mask per household, with additional available for purchase.

Mask availability and distribution information will be sent out separately at a later date.

CERTAINTY. It seems that word is less and less part of our vocabulary. Instead, we’re all consumed by a gnawing, frustrating sense of UNcertainty. We’re uncertain if our plans for 2020 and 2021 will happen. We’re uncertain when we’ll be able to open back up. We’re uncertain if the kids will be going to school next month. We’re uncertain when we’ll see loved ones in person again. We’re uncertain if life will ever return to what it was before this pandemic hit.

At the Rahr-West, we too are suffering from uncertainty. Twice now, the museum has been forced to close its doors. Every plan we make for exhibitions, events, and other programming requires multiple contingencies. I find that every conversation includes a caveat of “if we can actually do this...” It is a constant battle between our hope to provide the programming we promised versus our compulsion to prioritize safety for our visitors and staff. There’s no certainty.

Uncertainty isn’t hopelessness, though. With the limits on our ability to hold a normal in-person programming, there is opportunity to hold virtual events. Without access to our classrooms, we can produce take-home kits. Without access to some of Wisconsin’s best art, we can all become creators of new art.

And when the situation improves and some normalcy returns, I can say with certainty that the Rahr-West Art Museum will still be here. Our foundation is rock solid. Our support systems, both public and private, benefited from generous donors and a committed community during these difficult times. We are, in fact, poised to enter the next decade with an eye on growth. 2020 confirmed that Manitowoc is bettered by the arts, and recognizes it. That is certainly good news.

Greg Vadney
Upcoming Livestream Events

Portrait of Manitowoc: Livestream with Sonia Vasquez
Join us for a livestream of Sonia Vasquez painting as part of the Portrait of Manitowoc Project. This livestream will provide insight into Sonia’s process when doing traditional oil portraits and a Q & A session.

Friday, November 20 at 1:00pm
Saturday, December 12 at 1:00pm
Stream live on Facebook at Coolest Coast or on YouTube at Coolest Coast

Erin LaBonte: 2020 Mural Projects
Erin will share insights on her 2020 public art and mural projects. She will explain the process for the projects and provide stories behind the artwork.

Thursday, December 3 at 5:00pm
Stream live on Facebook at The Rahr West or on YouTube at Rahr-West Art Museum

Curator’s Show and Tell with Curator Diana Bolander
Highlights special objects and stories from the Rahr-West Art Museum’s collections in short presentations that will stream live on Facebook and YouTube every other Wednesday in November and December 2020.

Rahr-West Doll Collection
Wednesday, November 25 at 3:00pm

Walt Kuhn in our Collection
Wednesday, December 9 at 3:00pm

Christmas Plates
Wednesday, December 23 at 3:00pm
Stream live on Facebook at The Rahr West or on YouTube at Rahr-West Art Museum

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

As Covid-19 continues in our everyday lives, I would like to say thank you to the staff of the museum, the board, and the friends committee for thinking outside the box to keep the everyday operation of the museum moving forward.

While the museum is still physically closed to the public, it is still open virtually! Please check out our website or Facebook page to see all the wonderful programs and events that museum staff is organizing for members as well as the community.

I would like to thank ALL the members who renewed with our second membership mailing. Those of you at the $250 membership level — stay tuned for the unveiling of the 2021 art print in January! Please remember that the Rahr-West Art Museum provides wonderful benefits to members, as well as many great opportunities to all art enthusiasts.

Have blessed Holiday Season everyone!

Amy Fricke Weigel
President-Rahr-West Arts
Governing Board
Participation Information for the Portrait of Manitowoc Project

Please use the provided paper and do not extend your work past the existing 4x6” dimensions. The “postcards” will be mounted in a double-sided frame so that they can be viewed from both sides.

This is 140lb oil primed paper — sufficient for most commonly used mediums, could be primed further with a gesso if desired. Please use the provided paper only.

Recommended Media:

Any two-dimensional media is appropriate: oil paint, acrylic paint, watercolor, gouache, pencil, markers or paint pen, or oil pastel. Any loose material, such as pastel, chalk or charcoal must be sprayed with fixative. Any paint used should be completely dry before returning the work. If using collage, please be advised that photo corners will be used in the installation and the corners must be thin enough to fit into the photo corners.

Instructions:

1. Orient the paper vertically (that is the longer edge of paper is on the left and right side, not along the top).

2. Create a self-portrait on one side of paper using your choice of media. You can interpret “self-portrait” however you choose.

3. Please include on the backside: your name, your age, medium, and answer the question: “How do you feel about your identity in relation to Manitowoc?”


Participation in the project gives the Rahr-West Art Museum and Sonia Vasquez permission to reproduce the work with credit to the artists. The work will not be returned to you and becomes the property of the artist. The Rahr-West Art Museum reserves the right to omit any submissions not in keeping with the spirit of the project.

This project will be installed at the Rahr-West Art Museum February 28-June 6, 2021 and may travel to other locations after that.

The specialty paper and instructions are available outside the Rahr-West Art Museum entrance or by contacting the Rahr-West Art Museum at rahrwest@manitowoc.org or (920) 686-3090.

Sponsored by: Art Bridges
2021 Exhibition Schedule
*Schedule Subject to change

Marc Chagall: Le Cirque
December 6, 2020—February 21, 2021

Portrait of Manitowoc Project
February 28—June 6

Youth Art Series: Big East Conference
April 11—April 18

Youth Art Series: Eastern Wisconsin Conference
April 22—May 2

Long Time Passing
April 18—August 1

Ann Barbeau Photography
May 9—July 3

The Manitowoc/MOWA Cabinet
July 11—September 5

Really Big Prints
July 30—September 12

Rahr-West Members & Manitowoc County Invitational
August 22—September 12

Destination Moon: The Apollo 11 Mission
September 9—September 13

The Art of Tablesettings
October 8—November 7

Tiny Art
October 27—November 28

Christmas in the Mansion
November 26, 2021—January 10, 2022

Ladies of the Lake Quilt Exhibit
December 5, 2021—January 20, 2022

Upcoming Event

Erin LaBonte:
2020 Mural Projects
Thursday, December 3, 2020 @ 5:00 pm

Join the Rahr-West Art Museum as artist Erin LaBonte shares insights on her 2020 Mural Projects. In 2020 Erin worked with other artists on several large scale murals and public arts projects in the Manitowoc area with inspiration drawn from community leaders, the diversity of our community, and art from the Rahr-West’s collection. In this presentation, she will explain the process she went through for these projects and give us the stories behind the artwork. You can stream this presentation on the following platforms:
https://www.facebook.com/RahrWestArtMuseum/
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeh_QkzlFwzk12nQq1ptXnQ

About Erin LaBonte

Erin LaBonte received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and her Master of Fine Arts from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. She has participated in artistic residencies in Costa Rica and Argentina and has exhibited nationally and internationally. Erin practices many artistic mediums in her own studio work. She is an advocate for bringing art to public spaces and for community engagement. Erin is dedicated to inspiring and educating young people in their personal explorations. She served as associate professor of art at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, WI for nine years and is co-founder of Yonder an art space in Algoma, WI.
In October 2020, artist Sterling Rathsack donated three of his paintings to the Rahr-West Art Museum: Don’t Cry, Self-Portrait, and Three Generations. Sterling Rathsack was born in Manitowoc in 1947. His father’s family had been in Manitowoc for three generations. His father spent twenty-three years in the Air Force so he traveled a lot as a child but always considered Manitowoc to be home. Rathsack graduated from Lincoln High School and then served in the Air Force for seven years. Later Rathsack worked at Holy Family and attended UW-Manitowoc and then UW Superior. From 1986 through 2006 Rathsack was self-employed as an artist. In 2006 he was hired to teach full time at Fond du Lac Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota.

The three paintings that came into the Museum’s collection are from a group of autobiographical works comprised of fifty or so paintings that represented Rathsack’s experience from birth to leaving home at eighteen. Sterling Rathsack told us the stories behind the paintings:

“The painting Don’t Cry represents my father’s first aide, applying mercurochrome, a then popular antiseptic to cuts and scrapes I received in a bicycle accident. I may have been around ten years old. My Dad, like a lot of men of his generation, stood a bit back from child rearing and was gone for extended periods of my childhood because of his role in the military. He was good in an emergency, something he was trained to handle.”

“Three Generations shows my Dad, Sterling Rathsack Sr., my grandfather, Walter C. Rathsack and me after fishing. When my family visited in Wisconsin, my Dad always found time to fish with his father and brothers either in the lakes around Manitowoc or up north at a family cabin near Butternut, Wisconsin. Three Generations actually shows us with a salmon caught on Puget Sound, Mukilteo, Washington. My grandparents had traveled by train, the Milwaukee Road, all the way from Manitowoc so my grandfather could fish Puget Sound. He shipped the fish back to Manitowoc in an iced wooden packing crate so he could show it to everyone back home. His picture, holding the fish, was published in the Manitowoc paper.”

“The Adult Self Portrait represents me at about age forty. I painted it for an invitational exhibition of artist’s self-portraits. It is the painting that got me started doing autobiographical works. The fifty plus paintings of my childhood travelled far, some to Sweden others all over the country in one manner or another. I went on to paint the life and times I witnessed in Southeast-Asia during the Viet Nam War.”

Thank you to Sterling for this generous donation, we look forward to exhibiting these paintings soon.
Greetings from the Rahr-West Art Museum Charitable Foundation

It is time once again for our annual appeal. The annual appeal involves reaching out to folks who are interested in and care about The Rahr-West Art Museum and asking them to consider making a gift to support the museum as part of their year-end giving.

The Charitable Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization created to ensure the museum’s financial security. For donors, it assures that your gifts are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. The Rahr-West Art Museum Charitable Foundation raises funds through an annual appeal, our annual fund raising event and gifts from generous donors.

In recent years the Foundation has provided funding for numerous art education programs and supplies, a large art storage system, updated security system, appraisal of the collection as well as annual distributions to support the museum administrative position. We have also committed funds for a future new sign in front of the museum.

Thank you to all who have given to or attended Rahr-West Art Museum Charitable Foundation events. Your generosity is much appreciated.

Mike Halla
President
Rahr-West Art Museum Charitable Foundation

From the Friends of the Rahr-West

It was so nice to see everyone enjoying themselves at the Table Setting reception. There seemed to be an aura of the Rahr coming back to life. Thank you for coming.

I have been president of the Friends Committee for the past two years and I want to thank the Friends for their help and support—especially in the recent past months. We are a group that is solid, creative and heavily invested in the Rahr.

I’d also like to thank Greg, Diana, Melissa and Bob for their willingness to help me. As we move forward our way of life will continue to be challenged. Friends will try to make meeting that challenge a little easier. Hopefully we will see you at Christmas in the Mansion.

Be well and safe!

Jeanie Miller
Friends President

Thank You

On Thursday, October 1st, members and Tablesetting designers were invited to a socially distant opening of the annual Art of Tablesetting Exhibit. While this year has been unlike any other in so many ways, we were pleased to be able to offer this private opening reception to members and tablesetting designers. Attendees were required to reserve a time slot to attend, to ensure adequate personal space was allowed for each person. Additionally, instead of hors d’oeuvres and beverages being offered during the event, the Friends of the Rahr-West created fantastic little “to-go” boxes with snacks and cider, for attendees to enjoy once they got home. We would like to thank all the Tablesetting designers for their commitment to make this annual exhibit possible during these uncertain times. Also, a HUGE thank you to the Friends of the Rahr-West for not only organizing and carrying out a very different kind of reception, but for all that they graciously do for the Rahr-West throughout the year.
Give the gift of membership this holiday season and share all that you love about the Rahr-West with your friends and family. With a gift membership, you can experience exhibits, programs, and classes together! An annual membership includes invitations to member’s only events, discounts on classes and in the Shoppe at the Rahr, bus trips, and memories to last a lifetime!

Be sure to like “The Rahr-West” on Facebook for the most current information regarding events, take home kits, and other announcements!