



WARM STORIES

MENTOR PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS

2013-2014 WARM MENTOR PROGRAM



About the WARM Mentor Program from the Board:

I don't think there has ever been an artist who didn't have a mentor. When you think of it all the way back in time, every artist had someone cheering them on, coaching them and directing them towards their ultimate goals. Then that artist goes on to do the same for another artist or many other artists. If you could visualize this, it would be like an ever-growing tree of branches with each artist lifting the next up to take their art form even farther. The WARM mentor program is like its own tree of many ever-reaching branches in the forest of artists all around the world. It has lifted artist after artist and those artists have lifted even more artists with every cycle.

When an experienced artist offers knowledge and encouragement to a budding one, her confidence in her abilities soars and the time in her studio becomes so much more productive. Then the friendships and camaraderie that can form amongst the other protégées really feeds the overall creative energy. Bringing women artists together to build our community is WARM's greatest strength. Personally, when I first moved to Minnesota 20 years ago, it was WARM and the mentor program that was the initial seed for all my connections in the strong Minnesota arts community.

The structure and a sense of accomplishment that the WARM mentor program offers is a successful way for us to get the much needed cross pollination of ideas and encouragement to follow our artistic desires. Every woman that comes into the program has a unique set of goals specific to her needs, and each mentor and protégée is there to help them nurture those goals. Watching all the unique ways these goals are met is inspiring for all the protégées and mentors.

It is such a thrill to see the growth, the fruits of our labor, that takes place every two years when we come together in the final exhibition. But beyond that, the most exciting part of the mentor program is knowing that the connections the women have made will last a lifetime and become the fertilizer for the next cycle and all the cycles to come. _ Layl McDill, WARM Vice President

From the Coordinators:

It is really a complicated endeavor to write about the Mentor Program in a way that honors every Mentor and Protégée experience. It is such an honor to serve as coordinators of this unique program that has enhanced the lives and careers of women artists for over 30 years. This year there were 35 woman artists in the program, each working towards personal and artistic goals while slowly knitting together a community.

In the beginning this was a careful, tentative process. Over time, these relationships grew strength. Today these women are strong together. We are not sure the program participants see this today, as we write this, one month from the opening of the final exhibition. But we see it—every day this woven strength becomes more obvious, in every email, Critical Response and Exhibition Committee Meeting—the care these women are taking of the program and for each other. The dedication and commitment each has brought to this long two-year mentoring relationship has us proud and excited.

Right now, each artist is working hard on her artwork for the exhibition, on a final exhibition committee, and preparing for the end of this cycle. It is a beautiful ending to relationships grown together by shared hard work.

Many of them share their stories here.

The Coordinators,
Karen Searle and Tina Nemetz

2013-14 Program Participants

Linda Ricklefs Baudry	<i>Protégée of Marcia Soderman-Olson</i>	Layl McDill	<i>Mentor to Susan Gainen</i>
Mary Bergs	<i>Mentor to Cris Godoy Franchevich, Patricia Bronstein, Susan Solarz</i>	Ann Meany	<i>Protégée of Brenna Busse</i>
Barbara Bridges	<i>Protégée of Jill Waterhouse</i>	Maryellen Murphy	<i>Protégée of Jantje Visscher</i>
Patricia Bronstein	<i>Protégée of Mary Bergs</i>	Jennifer Palmquist	<i>Protégée of Jill Waterhouse</i>
Brenna Busse	<i>Mentor to Ann Meany</i>	Barbara Porwit	<i>Protégée of Michele Combs</i>
Michele Combs	<i>Mentor to Barbara Porwit</i>	Patricia Reinert	<i>Protégée of Brenda Litman</i>
Justine Di Fiore	<i>Protégée of Rochelle Woldorsky</i>	Kate Renee	<i>Protégée of Jill Waterhouse</i>
Rebecca Dudley	<i>Protégée of Farida Hughes</i>	Marcia Soderman-Olson	<i>Mentor to Linda Ricklefs Baudry, Madeline Kamp</i>
Debra Dworsky	<i>Protégée of Barb Kobe</i>	Susan Solarz	<i>Protégée of Jantje Visscher, Mary Bergs</i>
Danielle Jambois Edstrom	<i>Protégée of Deborah Foutch</i>	Cara Sophia Tollefson	<i>Protégée of Deborah Foutch</i>
Deborah Foutch	<i>Mentor to Danielle Jambois Edstrom, Cara Sophia Tollefson</i>	Mary Laurel True	<i>Protégée of Carolyn Halliday</i>
Cris Godoy Franchevich	<i>Protégée of Mary Bergs</i>	Jantje Visscher	<i>Mentor to Maryellen Murphy, Susan Solarz</i>
Susan Gainen	<i>Protégée of Layl McDill</i>	Jill Waterhouse	<i>Mentor to Barbara Bridges, Anne Kleinhenz, Jennifer Palmquist, Kate Renee</i>
Ann Gallick	<i>Protégée of Brenda Litman</i>	Rochelle Woldorsky	<i>Mentor to Justine Di Fiore</i>
Carolyn Halliday	<i>Mentor to Mary Laurel True</i>		
Farida Hughes	<i>Mentor to Rebecca Dudley, Kristin McCullough</i>		
Madeline Kamp	<i>Protégée of Marcie Soderman-Olson</i>		
Anne Kleinhenz	<i>Protégée of Jill Waterhouse</i>		
Barbara Kobe	<i>Mentor to Debra Dworsky</i>		
Brenda Litman	<i>Mentor to Ann Gallick, Kristin McCullough</i>		

Mentor Program Coordinators:

Tina Nemetz
Karen Searle

Mentor Program Committee:

Rita Dungey, Roxanne Richards,
Marcia Soderman-Olson, Amy Tillotson,
Jill Waterhouse

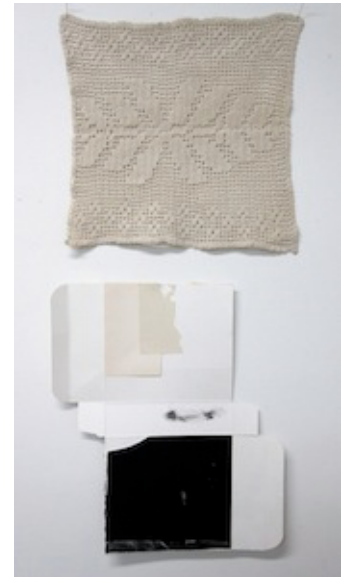
WARM Board President, Tara Tieso

WARM Programs Liaison, Debra Ripp

Mary Bergs

Mentor to Patricia Bronstein/
Cris Godoy Franchevich/Susan Solarz

The Mentor Program sets up a structure for rich conversation and dialogue in which the mentor and protégée form an intentional relationship focusing on art and art making. Of course, things are always more complicated than they seem and life has a way of molding and refining our plans and intentions. Goals change as we come to know ourselves and as we engage in a deep conversation with our work. As a mentor, it is my intention to support my protégée's through their journey toward a clearer understanding of what it means to say, "I am an artist." It has been a great pleasure to work with Patricia Bronstein, Cris Godoy Franchevich and Susan Solarz. I am grateful to these three amazing women artists who made an investment in themselves through the development of their work and through their commitment to showing up in the world as artists.



Util, Detail

Barbara Bridges

Protégée of Jill Waterhouse

As my WARM story started in November 2012, I wrote the following goals:

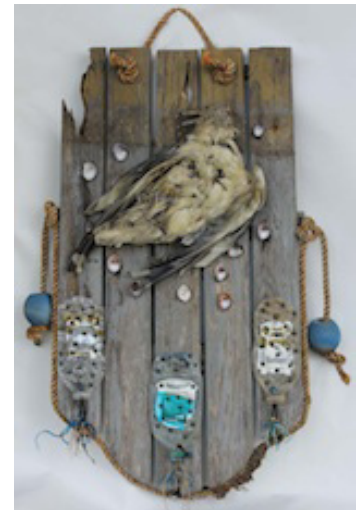
*I am interested in moving from being an educator/artist to artist/educator. I want the voice and the message to empower the art. I want to employ my art objects as the catalyst for ongoing social dialogue, which encourages social action.

*I want the art to speak for itself but I want the collective data/history to empower the voice of the visual object. I respect the voice of the solo artist but that is not what I hope to develop during my time as a protégée.

*I am more interested in putting the questions out there and participating in the unfolding dialogue - not finding the answers myself.

In September 2014, I write:

*With the support of my protégée sisters (Jennifer, Anne and Kate Renee) and mentor (Jill Waterhouse)... Done, Done and Done.



Jonathan Liv: Boston Habor 2014

Patricia Bronstein

Protégée of Mary Bergs

When I became a WARM protégée almost two years ago, I had created lots of materials to make art. I had been collecting and making “stuff” for years, but I didn’t exactly know what to do with it all. When I met my mentor, Mary Bergs, aka Bean, for the first time I kept pulling materials out of drawers to show her—primarily paper of all kinds. Images I liked, images I had made. I kept saying, well here is this “but...”.

Finally, Bean said, take them out of the drawers, look at them, and put them up on the walls. That was a turning point. Everything had been hidden away, probably much like my desire to be an artist, and not entirely real. Seeing everything, well not really everything, that would have been overwhelming, made me an artist. I had thought about making art, but as someone once said to me, “thinking about it isn’t the same as doing it”. And how right she was.

Having a mentor and being in this structured program was very important. My mentor is encouraging and not too pushy. I wouldn’t respond well to pushy. I don’t know that I would say the program empowered me. No one can empower you except yourself. What the program did though is start me on the road to becoming an artist. Now when someone asks what I do, I say I’m an artist and that feels right.



Hidden Entrance

Brenna Busse

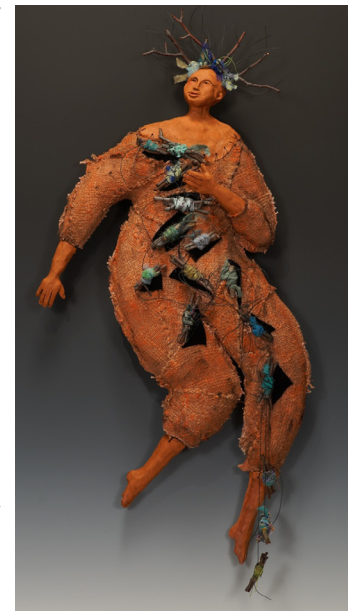
Mentor to Ann Meany

The mentor/protégée relationship is, for me, as mentor—both inspiring and humbling.

It is inspiring to watch Ann as she unfolds in her creative process: challenging herself, open to exploring, making mistakes, accomplishing goals, creating art that she loves and that expresses her intention.

It is humbling as well to be witness to this process -- like a living thing, like magic--the creating that manifests. There is also a trust that develops, both in the creative process itself, and between us, as we walk this untraveled path. During our work together, both Ann and I have had major life challenges: death, illness and other abrupt visits of the unexpected. Throughout this whole time, in spite of difficulties, Ann has kept her fierce dedication to her art. Because her work is so personal, she pours her thoughts and emotions into her work and transforms them, thus adding layers of meaning. Her art becomes healing for her, and in turn touches others.

I have no doubt that Ann will continue to focus her process, articulate her meaning, and hone her voice. She is an amazing artist, with powerful skill, wit and deep compassion. It is a privilege to work with her.



Reverie of Memory:
Looking Back Letting Go

Michelle Combs

Mentor to Barbara Porwit

Barbara entered the WARM Mentor Program to engage herself, develop confidence, and move forward in pursuit of artistic goals. She already had a degree in Studio Art and a Masters in Art Education (not required).

Her project, "Super Hero Portraits", of breast cancer survivors has taken off in leaps and bounds. She worked hard at networking, marketing, and finance. I strongly admire her pursuit with her busy schedule. She is balancing work, motherhood, college, and her art. I am amazed! I admire her drive to grow artistically and to go after her dreams.

Recently, Barbara shared a newly completed painting; she was happy with the results. She reported feeling like a "real painter!" Barbara had made a breakthrough with newly acquired skills. I was thrilled for her! As a mentor I share, encourage, guide, and provide resources. Mentoring has been a privilege and a growing experience. It has been a pleasure to work with Barbara.



Wild Flower Promenade

Rebecca Dudley

Protégée of Farida Hughes

Before I started the WARM Mentor Program, I knew I had a certain degree of talent and creativity, and I also knew I did not lack for ideas. Oddly enough, however, I didn't have focus or an ability to bring a painting to a satisfying conclusion. I didn't have confidence in myself or command of the media to get my ideas across, in a way that suited me. This is strange because I had made a living as an art teacher at one time and was a studio art major. I had no gallery representation, nor had I ever sold anything or shown my work. Having a mentor for critique and motivation was a simple, yet amazing force behind the growth I have made.

My first "ah-ha" moment came at the first potluck for both mentors and protégées. We shared our work. Every one took for granted that everyone else there was an artist. I was thinking, "Doh! That includes me!" The second came soon after my Critical Response. There is a certain high that comes from the CR, and then a letdown. Almost like the feelings after a big celebration; all the planning and anticipation is done, so, then what? I went through a 6 week slump where nothing I did looked right. And then I just decided to choose a direction, take photos and paint until the feeling came back. I forced myself to paint until, one night, at 2 am, the groove came back. I get it now. I have the ideas for several series I want to paint and it will take me a few years to achieve all of it.

I really enjoyed having a mentor and will miss the experience and her when this is all done. It is difficult to describe. I have tremendous respect for all she has done for me, the integrity she brought to the position and the relationship we have.

I chose Farida because she was a serious artist who digs into the particulars of painting media. She also has gallery representation in far regions of the U.S. shows regularly and has worked with major corporations. My personal life has been pretty intense, which I regret and wish it hadn't bled into this experience, however, Farida handled it so well. As far as Farida's impact on my work, I will never forget one of our first monthly meetings. She closed one eye and stuck her thumb out. "See this stroke here? That could be toned down a little." One brush stroke! Of course! It all matters as part of the element of a painting as much as an object would in representational art! That was the beginning of my education on creating abstracted work. My brain went to all new levels of how to paint in that one instant. Since then I have focused primarily on abstracted works and how to more intelligently employ media—I knew I had to take advantage of Farida's strengths while still in the program. This was the smartest thing I could have done.

I always used to wonder if I would ever be far enough in my own skills that I would be able to paint on my own without any feedback or critique to get me through. Now I am doing that. A good critique from someone I respect is always welcome, but I don't seem to have to rely on it now. It is terribly freeing. Being part of the program was a big part of this arrival.

Much of the mentoring, activities and art openings occur in NE Minneapolis. This gave me a chance to experience all of the studio spaces in the different buildings. I became familiar enough with the places and the people that it no longer felt like a distant goal; this led to my decision to rent a studio in the Northrup King Building. This has been one of the more "gutsy" and committed decisions I have ever made. To me, this means I will paint on a regular basis and it puts me in the realm of "real artist." Even though I used to work from a studio in my home, renting in NKB is a completely different level of commitment and artistic statement.

Interestingly enough, my studio mate was once a protegee in the program several years ago. She is an amazing teacher and business woman. I am going to learn a lot from her. It appears to be a natural segue from where I am at now to where I will be once I move my belongings next month. This never would have happened had I not decided to be a WARM protégée. Art is being made and life is happening.



Memories of Clear Water

Susan Gainen

Protégée of Layl McDill

Layl McDill is my mentor, and I hoped that she would pick me because I suspected that she would not tamp down my whimsy. I was right.

Adventures and Happy Accidents are the themes of our two years together. The rare times when we sat in my living room studio for our monthly meeting coincided with the early part of my rotator-cuff-surgery recovery. Other than that, we had an adventure every month.

Best Adventure Ever. We hit the jackpot on our first visit to Ax-Man, a beloved mecca for artists-in-search-of-inspiration. "Who knew that there was such a thing?," I asked when we found the flat black plastic gizmo used to measure the diameter of wire. The "Ax-Man Gizmo" became the inspiration and template for 10 postcard-sized paintings. After scanning each one into Photoshop™, I created a set of digital abstracts called, Gears from Ax-Man, which were part of my 2013 Image-a-day Project. Two went on to some acclaim in 2013: Gear #3 was juried into the 10x10x10 Tieton (Washington) Show, and Gear #10 was selected for Exhibition Without Walls, "Your Choice" show.

Best show that we visited. No contest here. We saw the second part of the Bell Museum's Audubon and the Art of Birds show. I was mesmerized and inspired. My creature paintings are almost as far from taxonomically correct as you can get. The creatures are recognizable because I focus on their shapes, colors (with or without tiny internal designs), and whimsical spirits. Audubon, on the other hand, manages with elegance to paint birds that are detailed, realistic, and so life-like that you can hear them chirping. His magnificent Carolina Parrots gave me a vision of how my Cave Paintings show piece might be organized.

Best happy accident. At Layl's encouragement, I found two retail outlets for my work: The Art Shoppe at Midtown Global Market (Minneapolis) and Three Sisters' Eclectic Arts (St. Paul). At Three Sisters, artists can opt to rent and merchandize their space. I have lots of cards, and went back to Accent Store Fixtures, a used store fixtures place from a previous adventure, looking for a card rack. Did I bring a card to test for sizes? Of course not, I came home with a non-returnable postcard rack that was the wrong size for my cards. "Aargh. Another waste of money," I said. "No," said Layl. "Use the rack for your line of 'Very Old Saint Paul' postcards that will be part of the Mentor-Protégée Show."

Best inspiration: Layl McDill. Every time I visit Layl's studio at Clay Squared I am inspired to look again at the tiny spaces that we both love. Her work in polymer clay is all about tiny spaces and designs and how they fit (or can be made to fit) to create astonishingly exciting work. Her work as a teacher (in person and on-line) makes me think of ways to share my work. Her exuberant approach to creativity is infectious (in a good way) and I am glad that there is no way to inoculate against it. Thank you.



Lost Cave Paintings of St. Paul

Ann Gallick

Protégée of Brenda Litman

We bring our life's journey to our art. At times we call upon our fire and spirit to guide us to the unknown.

I met my mentor, Brenda Litman, at a time when I had a head full of ideas and wanted to delve into the many projects that hadn't received attention. The journey began when I met her.

Our conversations were rich, and we enjoyed the adventure. I was determined while wrestling with my inner critic. Discovery and growth continued. I sanctioned my own learning and she enhanced the experience through books and conversations. I am very self-directed, yet when stressful times forced me to tame the fire, she remained my strength. After pausing from the glow of the Critical Response, I saw all that work and energy begin to collide and appear in a new body of work.



Reeds in Changing Season

Images live in me. My art is the story of my relationship with nature, and the energy I experience being with nature most often related to my female cycle. Images appear through dreams and journaling and relate back to my many experiences. Images glow and simmer slowly until the spirit calls and then my style is fast as images pour out of me.

I had an image burning in me that I wanted to draw for the MN State Fair 2013 art competition. I purchased larger paper than typically use and borrowed a truck to transfer a drawing board to my home. One Saturday afternoon, the spirit called and the image was ready to come out. I set the timer on my stove for one-hour and let it go. At a later date my father said, "That drawing has arrived Anna. How much time do you have invested in it?" I replied, "One hour." He said, "No, you have a lifetime invested in that image."

Farida Hughes

Mentor to Rebecca Dudley/Kristin McCulloch

Mentoring offers, among other things, an opportunity to be a guide, director, confidante, cheerleader, and friend. Sometimes one is also reminded that others are simultaneously balancing their creative work with not only the demands of personal lives, but sometimes also overwhelming grief and stress. The ability that women have in overcoming immense obstacles and still evolve and emerge artistically, to me is quite amazing.



Everybody, All the Time

Rebecca (Becky) Dudley has worked incredibly hard to do just this. In less than two years she has proven that in times of extreme duress, energy can be channeled into productive means. She has kept at the forefront satisfying her own needs from her art – healing, tangible production, self-identity, self-preservation. She dove in ambitiously from the beginning with many goals,

enjoyed the fruitfulness of achieving some, and deftly adjusted to let some go with the realization that they no longer fit her plan. As she has matured through the program she has emerged with a concise understanding of her work and the ability to produce something that is purely and identifiably her own.

In a recent meeting as she was ticking off all the peripheral collateral related to an upcoming exhibition (framing, photographing, labeling work, preparing a resume, bio or statement, writing out price sheets), she declared that she was finally having fun and feeling like she was really working as a professional artist. Seeing her satisfied smile, and the twinkle in her eye as she told me how good it felt to begin pumping out work in series, is all of the gratification a mentor needs. Becky's strength and confidence serves as a model for us all. I am proud of her for her achievements and look forward to what she will surprise us with next.

Kristin McCullough's approach to facing each day with humor and light-heartedness has been refreshing and no doubt allows her to manage her own challenges with ease. Though she has worked in a community of encaustic artists she has been able to identify and affirm her specific goals and decisions with regard to both the craft and the art of her work. She coaxes a quiet beauty out of her medium which reaffirms her need for serenity and quiet in her busy world.

She began the program with clearly defined goals of creating more, learning all she can about painting with encaustics, and building relationships with other artists. The business goals of working as an artist have not been the most important for Kristin, but in preparing for exhibitions, joining and working in a studio outside of the home, and in planning and fulfilling a successful CR, she has assumed the skills for many of the peripheral responsibilities an artist has.

For Kristin, the reality of always juggling her creative work with the demands of her job and young family has been ever-present. She has found ways to both artfully fit it all in and also face the reality with good-natured humor. Bringing family, friends, and colleagues into her artistic world allows an artist to acknowledge who she is at every turn, to weave her artistic path into all other aspects of life's responsibilities, let it be a part of her identity and factor into her relationships. Watching Kristin's work evolve and expand while she simultaneously narrows and closes in on her own voice and interests, has been a fulfilling journey for me as her mentor. She inspires me to remain clear and focused, even on those days when, as it went in a story she relayed to me of her own experience, "...all you can do is make a cornflake chicken on the counter-top". If you haven't been able to get to the studio, at least you can say you did that!

The layers of subtlety in Kristin's paintings remind me of the satisfying and necessary intimacy between artist and medium. Her work is like ambient music in a complex environment, begging one to look closely, and calmly dis-engage.

Anne Kleinhenz

Protégée of Jill Waterhouse

Here I am pondering my journey on August 15, the Feast Day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. What serendipity that I am writing my story on this holy day. This day feels like a fortuitous connection to the sweet Divine Feminine. My time being a WARM Protégée has anchored the resurrection of my art and a steadfast trust in the power of family, faith and Divine Feminine energy. I would not be here writing this without the constant support and love of my Mother, who I lost just prior to joining the program. I also give thanks to my son Alexander. They were my support and my companions in mind, body and spirit during all my art and travel adventures. My Mother continues to be inspiration for every image I take through the lens of a camera. She is always in my heart.



Reliquary of Buried Treasure, detail

It feels like there is a destiny that makes us sisters and tribal members. The WARM experience helped me to learn even more deeply that what we put into the lives of others comes back into our own. I am honored that I have had the opportunity to take this journey back to a committed art practice along with my treasured tribe of my one-of-a-kind Mentor, Jill Waterhouse, and my dear sisters of the heart, Jennifer, Barbara and Kate. All for one and one for all. Always.

At the core of my art is the intention of soul evolution. It all starts with simply standing on the voice of my heart. For me, the energy of the heart is the key for balancing social challenges, environmental issues, political turmoil, and any challenge to all life on Mother Earth and beyond.

The best advice I can offer if you want to join the program is to simply be brave. Do it. Have the courage to give it your all. When your time is complete, continue to remember your connections to the wonderful people you will meet. Challenges and doubts will surely be part of the journey. So will joy, laughter and inspiration. Do not hesitate. Show up. Pay attention. Tell the truth. Always follow your heart.

I came upon this program through what I thought at the time was a complete accident. However, now I know it was divine intervention. As I write this story, I ponder the discovery of the coincidences. My application was written on November 27, Feast Day of the Miraculous Medal. My work plan on December 8, the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception. This year, by another complete twist of fate, I discovered the stories of apparitions of Our Lady of Garabandal. All this timing was not chance. It was the Divine Feminine calling out to my soul.

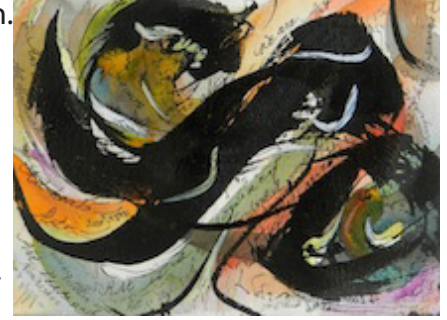
I am so grateful. I am so grateful. I am so grateful. I took the leap of faith. It took many long and winding roads to finally find my art path. Now I know the road less-traveled was there all along, just waiting to find resurrection in my heart. My WARM tribe helped me find my story. My story was a buried treasure, found just below the surface. I am blessed beyond measure. I wish the same for you as your journey begins.

Sending Love and Light. Always.

Brenda Litman

Mentor to Ann Gallick/Patricia Reinert

It has been a privilege and a joy to work with Ann Gallick and Patty Reinert. I marvel at their energies and abilities, what they strove to do and did accomplish. Ann has always painted and drawn very physically, inspired by nature. At our first meeting, I saw her excellent charcoal drawings. During the mentorship she wanted to work on her paintings and paint on fabric as well. She researched textile painting and by Fall had developed her line of hand-painted scarves that she sold at the LOLA Art Crawl and on her ETSY site. For the duration, she concentrated on her acrylic paintings, and she is now painting with a wonderful freedom and vigor that truly captures the energy she feels emanates from nature.



Art Is...

Patty painted realistic oil landscapes for years. She planned to work on her oil paintings, striving to make them less literal, less photographic. However, she soon became fascinated with encaustic painting. She researched encaustic, experimented, and took a 3 day workshop in Montana. She welcomed the challenges and opportunities of encaustic and has immersed herself in it. Her atmospheric landscapes capture the beauty she sees in the world. Patty has exhibited her encaustics at Three Crows in Delano and on her new website.

Ann and Patty's journeys of exploration and artistic growth inspired me to focus my own vision. While the forces of nature have always been a major influence on my work, I've also been inspired by the gestural strokes in the looser modes of Asian calligraphy. Now I've begun to concentrate on the calligraphic stroke, the symbolic mark, and the handwritten word as unique natural means of communication, expressions of human nature.

Kristin McCullough

Protégée of Farida Hughes

I have Tara Tieso to thank for introducing me to WARM and encouraging me to join the Mentor Program. Tara and I had been in several encaustic classes together while she was a protégée in the program. I can't remember her exact words, but the message was that I needed to establish a more disciplined practice. I have taken numerous art classes in various mediums over the years, but I was without focus or real engagement. I was a relative dabbler, without a real practice, at a point in my life where I had more commitments and less time, and I had a growing urge to create. I enjoy learning, though in truth, I have thought my creative practice would fall into place when I found the right medium.

When I started to explore the WARM Mentor Program, I thought about what it means to be a woman and an artist. I hadn't thought much about feminism in recent years. I often take for granted that my life and options have benefited from the struggle of others. And yet I am often reminded of the struggles and issues for women remain to this day. I took to reading books about artists and their

habits, their practices and paths to success, as if there was a recipe to follow. What resonated for me at the start of the program, and at its conclusion, is what it means to be a “woman artist” amid responsibilities and relationships that include husband, children, a full-time job (unrelated to art) aging parents, family and friends... Quite simply, amid my full life, I can either find my practice or I don't create.

People are surprised that my mentor, Farida Hughes, is not an encaustic artist, which prompts me to explain the difference between a teacher and a mentor. Prior to the program, I'm not sure I fully appreciated the distinction, but I now possess this sort of heartfelt knowledge that is difficult to articulate.

Admittedly, I found the initial mentor selection process unnerving, but decided I should/could/would trust the process. For my part, my match with Farida reinforced this the first time I heard her speak. Farida has this quiet, contained presence—strong and serene at the same time. You can feel her focus without being aware of laser-like scrutiny. She listens intently and thinks before she speaks. And she takes notes. I found this strangely reassuring, as though she was capturing my/our journey in a way that would make sense in the end—like a cartographer. It sometimes felt like a rambling path, with thwarted intentions, missed opportunities, resized grandiose ideas and pieced together bits and pieces of time. I would disjointedly share my experiences and Farida would listen, gently steering me this way or that, understanding that I was balancing my creative practice on some narrow edge of my life. She recognized that I needed encouragement and small versus large gestures to move forward. In a reflective way, she helped me to set goals, to focus and to recognize my accomplishments. Farida she is my role model, balancing her life and her art with grace and style.

How to summarize two years...? I can list my accomplishments; I now have a studio and an established practice. I exhibited work, wrote an artist statement wrote a press release, cataloged my work and learned to hang an exhibit. I intentionally connected with other artists so that I may have a community of support after the mentor program concludes. Most importantly, I developed my creative voice. What I previously conceptualized as sort of “divine inspiration”, I now understand is tangible - something to be continually developed, molded, fed and nurtured. And this has made the difference. I like to think of it as turning a channel or putting on a hat. Regardless of any circumstance, I can choose to engage my creativity - to be translated into any medium that lends itself to my own unique expression. Simply by just showing up.



Impel

Layl McDill

Mentor to Susan Gainen

Susan was poised to really take off before she started the program, but I think the Mentor Program was like giving her turbo boost rockets to really shoot for the moon and beyond! She has followed her true desires to create whimsical and fun paintings and then find the right homes for them by showing her work in a multitude of venues. She experimented with some types of venues like outdoor art fairs which didn't really work for her but then found some great consignment shops and galleries that have proven to be a great fit. She has kindled her childlike spirit and experimented with adding interesting textures to her medium. It has been a wonderful journey to travel along with her these past two years and see what fantastic creatures and worlds spring from her magical paintbrush.



Are there rockets in the universe?
Layl McDill

Ann Meany

Protégée of Brenna Busse

Honestly, I was not sure what the Mentor Program would look like for me. I knew that I wanted a mentor who would be nurturing, wise and who would hold me accountable. Brenna was all of these things for me.

Nurture – We both experienced the death of a loved one during the cycle. We shared the struggles of our children. I was upfront and honest with Brenna about my personal struggles, rather than trying to act otherwise. It helped us understand each other early on. I felt listened to and supported. This warmth and connection had a positive effect on my art and practice.

Wise – I was truly blown away by the depth of insight that Brenna brings to her work. Her art is beloved and she has helped me articulate my story so I am better able to bring my art to others. And...Brenna comes up with the coolest metaphors.

Accountable – I am a pretty hard worker who can be pretty hard on myself. Brenna helped me find balance. She was always encouraging about the amount of work I had gotten done. We studied a bit of art history together. And my goal to be showing my art in a gallery will be reached this month. This has been a great experience and I am lucky to have been guided by the wise and joyful Brenna.



Nesting Hope

Barbara Porwit

Protégée of Michele Combs

Participating in the WARM Mentor Program has been a catalyst in bringing a project I'd been thinking of doing for years from a vision into a functioning experiment in arts and healing. It's catapulted from concept to a viable, fund-able stage with partner organizations coming to the table to work with me to serve their communities. The show that I developed in the first ten months of the program has been on continuous display since October of 2013 and is being booked into 2016. We've had a number of hits in the media and are gaining visibility in the places we are trying to reach. This success happened because I made the commitment and I did the work.



Wonder Woman Katy

Becoming a protege in WARM provided a structure with monthly access to a mentor for guidance and support, and regular deadlines to be responsible towards my own goals. My mentor helped me develop artistically not only in technical skills, but by learning about me as a person and helping me dig deep to find answers to the question of why I create.

I also gained access to a treasure of resources via the entire network of mentors, protégées and other WARM members. However, I have come to realize that I am not only a receiver, but have become a supporter of others in turn. Through one of the Critical Responses I became aware of the outstanding work of two fellow protégées and I had the opportunity to include them in a group show I curated at Bethesda Hospital this summer. We are already talking about what kind of show to do next! I have gained confidence in myself as an artist, not only in the making of work that is significant and meaningful, but in communicating what the work is about and beginning to ask for, and receive, the fees that my work is worth. It's really satisfying to realize that things that once seemed insurmountable or too scary have become smooth and manageable – and that there is more and more to come.

Patricia Gilmer Reinert

Protégée of Brenda Litman

After twenty years of painting landscapes, I began to question how much longer I should continue to travel, take photos, and return home to create realistic landscapes in oil. Where was my creative voice? My Aha moment in WARM was learning that all serious artists go through this process, usually beginning with realism and moving on.

At just about this time, I took a simple workshop in encaustics, and joined the two year WARM program. The two complemented each other in newness. I found an artist in Montana and discovered my love for encaustics after an intensive three day workshop with Shawna Moore.

I loved having a mentor. Brenda Litman is an inspiring artist, kind, and a fountain of knowledge. We critiqued my work together once a month, and she kept me on task with weekly telephone conversations.

My Critical Response taught me that I am a real artist. I look forward to many years of growth in encaustics. I feel empowered now to apply to galleries and any other venues to show and sell my work. Thanks, WARM.



Mountain Floral Encaustic

Marcia Soderman-Olson

Mentor to Linda Ricklefs Baudry/
Madeline Kamp

It has been very gratifying to watch my two protégées in this cycle, Madeline Kamp and Linda Ricklefs Baudry, transform from being informal artists to serious professional artists. The first few months of working together involved helping them to take themselves and their work seriously. I also wanted them to become confident that consistent, focused work can lead to artistic success. Madeline recently moved to a new loft in the Schmidt Artist Lofts in St. Paul. It's a perfect setting for her, surrounded with a community of artists. Linda has had several one-person shows and soon will have more. Six months into the program, when Linda asked what was the single thing she could do to grow as an artist, I suggested she have a CR (Critical Response) which was held last August with a small group of people with Jill Waterhouse facilitating. Linda's work has really taken off in the past year. I recommend a CR for most artists.



Life Returns After A Long Winter

Cara Sophia Tollefson

Protégée of Deborah Foutch

I came into the WARM Mentor Program with a background as a media makeup artist. In the beginning days, while mentors and protégées alike, shared in conversation using art terminology fully unfamiliar to me, I listened and learned. Several years before becoming a protégée in the WARM Mentor Program I'd begun to create art on my own, playing in the realms of acrylic, oil pastel and dry pastel. At one point I had enrolled in an Artist's Way course lead by artist, Deborah Foutch. Deborah eventually became my WARM mentor. During those initial classes Deborah recognized my desire to move more fully into the role of artist, and even then, began to nurture my process.

During the course of the WARM Mentor Program the seedling artist in me was cultivated through Deborah's thoughtful, honest assessment and direction of both my work as an artist and my role as artist. Her intuitive guidance and skillful knowledge allowed me to establish an inner mooring whereto I could fasten my increasing assuredness in my abilities.

Over these past two years my artistic journey has been one of quiet musings, tentative application and exciting revelations as I've explored my creative voice while beginning to work in mixed media. While navigating unfamiliar artistic territories and pressing through apprehensions I continued to develop my skills and my creative eye as Deborah's steady presence offered ongoing support and encouragement.

My art has recently evolved into working in a larger format. As I continue my work in mixed media and collage I find this larger format to be an experience complete with both challenge and satisfaction.

Within the WARM Mentor Program I have come to know a wealth of talented, bright, strong, delightful women. Over the course of this program, these artists have persevered and created artwork through an array of challenges: some artistic, some personal. Their resulting work is that of extraordinary artistic accomplishment.

It has been an honor to be a part of the WARM Mentor Program wherein the community of artists is dedicated to fortifying the creative endeavors of each individual artist.



Three Wishes

Jill Waterhouse

Mentor to Barbara Bridges/Anne Kleinhenz/
Jennifer Palmquist/Kate Renee

In so many ways, this was a particularly rich and poignant Mentor Program cycle for me. It was the second time I chose to work with a group of protégées and the experience was enriching, enlightening – and truly magical. It is difficult, now, to imagine being in the program in any other way.

My protégées – Barbara Bridges, Anne Kleinhenz, Jennifer Palmquist and Kate Renee - could not be more different from each other. Yet, from the beginning, I believed and trusted that they would work well together. (Though, I am fairly certain the four of them had their doubts at the start of our first meeting!) Barbara, Anne and Jennifer were “women of a certain age,” but Kate was “barely legal.” So, the potential for a group division based on age was high. And that is not to say that Barbara, Anne and Jennifer had a lot in common. On the surface, far from it. But, instead of creating barriers, their differences in age, experience, personalities - and their approach to life and art - added a richness and a broadening of perspectives through the intimacy of the small group. I could see when they were together how they chose to support and honor each other. And, they also pushed each other towards their best work.

I was drawn to choose these four for their quirky, but loving spirits, their extraordinary gifts and talents, and that “something else” that I believed they could become, together.

Barbara, with her accomplished academic background, Eastern seaboard audaciousness and constantly busy hands, brought intelligence, guts and no small amount of glory to the group. Her ability to “get it done” was nothing short of astounding. She was also incredibly generous, in every conceivable way, and gave of herself and her resources to her protégée sisters with great selflessness. Anne, with her quiet and careful Midwestern sensibilities, brought a level of craft and care to the group. Though, she had been deeply wounded in her past life as an artist, she came back – with extraordinary valor - to start anew; and the rewards of her journey have been many fold and wondrous to behold. She also was the bearer of light, gifts and laughter within the group, creating a sisterhood of blessings.

Jennifer, thoughtful and with a deep spirituality, had a level of skill and craft in so many media it was difficult for her to choose which direction to pursue. Then, with the death of her mother just as the program began, she struggled for a time to find safe ground from which to explore. But, she hit her stride this summer – with a depth, bravery and beauty that were astonishing and moving to witness. She has embodied grace in action.

And last, but certainly not least, Kate, brought her surprisingly deep experience and accomplishments in the arts especially for an artist so young. Her passion, dedication, attention to detail and social media moxie, kept the group on its toes and always learning and growing. She rocketed her way to notoriety within the program, making other protégées (and their mentors) sit up and take notice.



Chernobyl's Pendulum

The four of them have opened me, stretched my skills as a mentor and deepened my understanding of how the program can work - at its best - for both mentor and protégée if all participants are open to the process and to being changed by it. But, what has been most meaningful for me to witness was: the courage that my protégées have shown, in stepping out of their comfort zone and taking the risks they've taken; their level of accomplishment, and how they've picked themselves up and kept going when they faltered or failed; what they've been willing to give and the gifts they've been willing to accept from me, from each other and from the program and its participants. My time with them has been transforming.

Rochelle Woldorsky

Mentor to Justine Di Fiori

My story is short, although it could be many pages that would include great conversations, insights into my protégée's personal practice, and the challenges of growth and change. When I started working with Justine Di Fiori, she told me that this was the year she decided to make art her life, not an exact quote. Becoming a WARM Protégée was the starting point. Let me make it clear, she was already a talented artist, but we can all look back to a time when we said, "This is it, I want to devote my life to art", and to grow as an artist and participate in the community of artists. The changes happened and the growth was tremendous. Mentoring has been a wonderful experience and the Mentor Program introduced me to some amazing talented and enthusiastic artists.

How has mentoring touched me? It stirs the blood.



Ya Sorta Know