

WARM Stories 2016

Brenda Litman's WARM Story

Mentor to Lisa Pemrick and Debra George

It has been a joy to work with Lisa Pemrick and Deb George, the two wonderful women and amazing artists who are my protégées this cycle. Each has taken a significant journey, and I am so proud of them and what they have accomplished. Watching their continued perseverance and progress inspires me.

Lisa left a job in the commercial world because she wanted to pursue art and devote herself to that pursuit. She took multiple art classes in the 6 months before joining the Mentor Protégée Program. She took classes in many different aspects of art from rendering the figure to abstract painting. She painted and experimented, and Lisa continued painting and experimenting throughout the mentorship, often doing a painting a day as part of her exploration. In the two years of the Mentorship Program, she developed a large body of very good work, mostly abstract. However, when it matched her goals, Lisa occasionally painted representationally, as she did when creating the outstanding portrait of her daughter, Veronica.

Deb is an artist who has worked in many media. She did a mosaic, *The Waves* for the initial Bethesda show, and she exhibited a polymer clay work reflecting her concern for the survival of the honey bees at the State Fair last year. During the Mentorship, Deb focused on a trove of family artifacts she discovered in her home – newspaper articles, photos, postcards, writings and artwork of the McMullen and George families, early settlers in 19th century Minneapolis. This raw material presented her with a wonderful puzzle to solve. Deb painted and drew, and she did research at history museums and the Borchert Map library to connect the pieces of her family's history. Her art exhibited in *Launching and Landing* is just the beginning, as she unravels this fascinating story and renders it visually.

Lisa and Deb's exploration and artistic growth inspire me as I think about my own work. While the forces of nature have always been a major influence on my work, I've also been influenced by the gestural strokes in the looser modes of Asian calligraphy. In the two years of the mentorship, I've developed several series of paintings utilizing letters and words. Now I'm concentrating on the gestural stroke itself, but always as a natural means of intuitive human communication. Art is a great journey!

Debra Ripp's WARM Story

Protégée of Deborah Foutch

For years I have had a persistent sense that some of my images needed to move out of their inert state. I could feel a quickening, as if they demanded to be manifested in a different form. The decision to participate in the WARM Mentor program was instant—it took place in one meeting, an evening of meeting the prospective Mentors. I left that night knowing that this was the moment I had been waiting for to carry out this manifestation. For me this is one of the most important and valuable gifts that I have received from the program.

Other gifts include meeting my superb Mentor, a clear new focus, a new skill set including doll making and assemblage, overcoming my fear of power tools, and a refreshed drive and confidence! I have also developed meaningful relationships with protégées in our small group meetings and beyond!

In my view there have been a number of values present when working with my Mentor. I was lucky that I found one who understood what I was yearning to articulate and knew how to get me there, yet respected me enough to leave the very intrinsic decisions for me to work out! I often get bigger ideas that I can realistically execute in a limited time frame and she has encouraged me to pace myself so I don't get overwhelmed and impair the work.. She has encouraged me to imagine the narrative in episodes instead of whole volumes I have learned to consider the work as a continuation, so each episode will lead to the next. That guidance was especially helpful in the sense that I was able to revisit and regenerate the work that I always felt was my "real

work". She also taught me some fantastic techniques that will effectively enrich my aesthetic in years to come.

The best thing about this experience is that I have discovered this new form for my character, Toberson. I have also discovered an equivalent figure in the Matron; she is also a living and breathing character! I feel like I have truly given new life to these images and they have become, for me, living beings!

Ellie Kingsbury's WARM Story

Mentor to Katie Palmer

It's a common thing in our culture to set goals, make lists and assess accomplishments, and indeed this mentorship program embodies a lot of that. But I think the bigger picture—why we're all here—is more about the spirit of identity. How brave it is for each of these women to make a bigger commitment to their art, and how great is the reward by saying they're worth it. Art and artist is all the better for it.

Katie is undeniably awesome, and I'm sure if there was a vote right now she'd top trend #misscongeniality #hardestworking #prolific #committed #notafraidto trybut I'm biased and I bet every mentor thinks that about their protegee. Earnestly speaking though, she packed every spare moment she had making art and taking her talents seriously. I have been truly impressed with everything she's done. So ticking off her accomplishments doesn't tell half the story. She has been fully present as an artist and she knows the value of it. Art world and artists are all the better for it.

Linda Snouffer's WARM Story

Protégée of Deborah Foutch

By the end of the 2014, I was bored with my work, frustrated with a season of poor sales, and seriously considering completely chucking my art. A few sessions of constructive criticism gave me an understanding of how my work was lacking; artist friends encouraged me to push my work forward, but I did not have skills or direction to make the necessary advancements—I'd taken myself as far as I could on my own.

My primary goal as a protégée was to learn painting techniques and incorporate them into my botanical printmaking. The early months in the program were filled with learning opportunities and happy accidents; I attended numerous classes, which gave me some basic skills in watercolor and surface design. Discovering tissue paper as a medium was perhaps the most exciting addition to my studio work (and completely accidentally). Learning to use layers of ink-infused tissue and organza was crucial to producing work with the depth that I so eagerly sought.

Deborah Foutch was patient, but persistent with me when I repeatedly said “I can't do that” to suggestions she made. Her positive feedback and consistent nudges pushed me to progress, in spite of my inner blocks. I gained a new eye for my environment and confidence to work outside my safety box; with the enhanced skills and new sense of self I can now produce pieces I never imagined two years ago!

Ironically, the longer I worked with my mentor, my focus became less on printing, but making backgrounds for compositions filled with complex layering and depth. The botanical prints laid on these surfaces now have perspective of paintings and engage the viewer to look more deeply into the work.

For several years, I felt like I was standing on a station platform watching trains filled with artists whiz by me. The WARM Mentor program makes me feel as though I finally stepped on a train! I don't know exactly where I am heading, but I know I want to go there!

Lisa Anderson Fratzke's WARM Story

Protégée of Marcie Soderman-Olson

After attending an informational meeting for the WARM Mentor/Protégé 2015/16 cycle, I was hooked. Hearing Tina and Karen describe with deep passion what the program had to offer, I realized what had been missing from my life and my practice. As artists, we spend so much time in solitude it is easy to lose perspective of our goals and the uniqueness of our own work. A community, a community of *artists*, a community of *female artists* was what I needed.

My mentor, Marcie Soderman-Olson, was a perfect match for me. What I knew about her before we started our journey together was minimal. I knew her to be an actively exhibiting, highly talented artist with extensive experience as an Art Educator. What I did not know was how much her kind and gentle guidance would motivate me to push through periods of self-doubt. The biggest and most profound piece of advice she gave me was to not take myself so seriously. During the artistic process, I would feel paralyzed when a painting was going in the right direction, afraid that if I tried to finish it I would ruin any progress I had made. I needed to learn to take a step back, view the painting as a whole and stop getting hung up on one or two areas. She had me imagine creating a piece of work only to destroy it, as a lesson that brush strokes are not precious! Once I let go and continued to paint through my insecurities, I felt empowered and the fear disappeared.

I am a self-motivated person but I also thrive on outside deadlines. Having scheduled meetings with goals set for each month forced me to stay on task despite all that life handed me over the past two years. I painted my way through some tough times—fearful at first, but energized by fellow female artists and forever dedicated to this journey.

Michele Combs' WARM Story

Mentor to Karin Jacobs and Dianne Merten

I've had the privilege to work with Karin Jacobs and Dianne Merten.

Karen came to WARM through the encouragement of friends who went before her. She carved out space for painting while juggling family obligations, illness, and loss. Her love for animals led her to painting pet portraits. Ever since Karen was a young girl horses were a passion. She has indulged this passion by painting large format images of retro toy horses and their riders. Karen has a clear vision, challenges herself, is growing artistically, and developing a unique body of work. **Highlights include** - Selling a painting to a hospital, pet commissions, and being juried into special exhibits.

Dianne entered the WARM program with a background in decorative painting and a start in the fine art of landscape painting. Her goals in the program were to devote more time to her art, grow in technical skills, develop confidence as a landscape artist, and market her work. With her motivation and drive she has done all these things. Looking at her paintings today is a joy, as she is capturing a sense of place through increased understanding of what makes a painting successful. Dianne is capturing and sharing the natural beauty she perceives. **Highlights include** - participating in her first Plein Air Competition and winning first place in the open class, and winning best of show at the Highland Art Festival.

The best thing about being a mentor is watching your proteges grow, learn, and thrive, while feeling that you were a part of it. I like the opportunity to give back and share what I've learned from my experience, teachers, and mentors. In the process I grow and learn as well.

The biggest advantage for budding artists in WARM is developing a one-on-one relationship with an experienced artist who cares about you and can help you build skills/confidence in your artistic pursuits.

Catherine A. Palmer's WARM Story

Protégée of Ellie Kingsbury

I was taking steps to make my life more Katie Palmer and Art centric. Through acquaintances, I started to go to WARM-sponsored events and I ended up at the show "Beyond the Surface" during Ann Meany's artist talk. I was blown away by her work and the narrative with it. At that moment I started to ponder: "What would I work on if I was a protégée?" I thought: Art Business, Grant Writing Ideas, Tools and Confidence. I was wanting to gain some new skills, but it seemed like a Leap of Faith. Over the course of two years I have worked on many of those aspects, but was delighted to also receive Fellowship and Community with other like-minded Women.

Kate Vinson's WARM Story

Protégée of Jantje Visscher

Before this program I was someone trying to fit art into my life. I have had many diverse opportunities including travel, work, and experiencing unique communities across the country.

As a high schooler, I was a photographer for the yearbook staff, intending to be the next Margaret Bourke White in college. As often happens I changed my focus but kept my camera close, unfortunately slowly drifting away from direct interaction with art. My interest and connection came back while I was in graduate school. It rather demanded its place in my life through the medium of fibers. Fiber arts uses a vast variety of materials, techniques, and processes. As a kinesthetic learner, working with fibers engages my hands and body. I find these techniques demand a physical interaction which opens an inner artistic dialogue and allows me to surrender to the process.

My hope for the Mentor/Protégée program was to understand my connection to art and what drives me as an artist; to find my artistic voice and build a solid foundation for it. This program facilitated a commitment and provided time to reflect. My mentor, Jantje Visscher and I were able to dig below the artistic surface despite the challenges

of daily life. I have found that I enjoy the process of creating from nothing; starting from the ground up so that my structures or forms arise from a new surface. The following are some reflections on this surface into structure concept:

investigation of possibilities.

defines the space creating relationships and dialogue.

exploration, understanding, and expanding the nature of the materials

provides direct manipulation and breaking boundaries.

creates meaning, presence and existence to the new surface.

allows for play, experimentation, storytelling.

At the conclusion of this experience, I find myself making a permanent spot for art in my life and pursuing opportunities to further grow my voice and reach as an artist. I look forward to the journey.

Claudia Poser's WARM Story

Mentor to Ann Ribbens and Alexandra Norwick

My original motivation to be a mentor in this cycle was a desire to give back to the program that empowered me to take my own work seriously. I didn't expect the experience to be as rewarding for me as a mentor as it had previously been as a protégée. Ann and Alexandra are very different from each other, both in terms of their media, their ages, their life experiences and their goals. I have come to admire them greatly. They've both persevered with their artistic goals through unexpected life events.

When Ann and Alexandra recently had a joint Critical Response session at my studio, I was thrilled that the work they've done during the cycle has brought them to the place they'd hoped for at the beginning. Ann has transformed a desire to loosen up and introduce transparency into a series of complex, abstract works that are truly in her own voice (while mastering a new dyeing technique.) Alexandra has given herself permission to make art from deep within her soul. She has created a body of compelling, thought-provoking work with the power to evoke archetypes.

They have both exposed me to their worlds – Ann has expanded my view of fiber arts, and Alexandra has taught me to see color, painting, and recently, while viewing Eastern European art, cultural references in new ways. Throughout this cycle, I have been humbled to discover that my main role is to be a witness to their process, and that listening itself can be a catalyst for artistic courage and development. On a less lofty note, I've observed on several occasions that I need to hear my own advice and apply it to myself. I am immensely grateful to them both for their enthusiasm and generosity. My own work is expanding as a result, and that is the greatest gift of all.

Layl McDill-s WARM Story

Mentor to Laura Burlis

I was just thrilled when I found out I would be working with Laura Burlis for this cycle. I have known her for many years and always thought she had a bottomless well of creativity and skill but had not had the opportunity to really explore her art career to the fullest. Throughout this cycle Laura struggled with finding the time to create while dealing with many life struggles, but each time we met she discovered more about herself as a creator. For instance, she realized that she was best at creating while she traveled.

I have enjoyed sharing my experience with art fairs and application processes with Laura. Mostly, I think it is so important to hear that even your mentor gets rejected (often!) and the strategies to use to keep yourself going for the next application. Laura has been very ambitious in applying to a wide variety of showing and creating opportunities and pushing herself to try new venues for her art.

One of Laura's major goals was to turn her polymer clay ideas into paintings. She wanted to push herself to rediscover her painting skills that she has used on and off during her long career as an artist. She was able to figure out how to travel with large canvases in order to create as she traveled – stretching the canvas when she arrived

and then taking it apart to travel home. As she travels more and creates on the go, she will surely perfect this process.

Watching Laura gradually take her art more and more seriously and put it at the top of her list of things to do has been very exciting. She has seen herself moving in this direction for many years, but the mentorship program has given her an extra boost to push herself in this direction. It will be even more exciting to watch her soar off on her own after the program is over as she takes the foundation she has built and pushes her art even further.

Alexandra Norwick's WARM Story

Protégée of Claudia Poser

Before I go on on telling how the program changed my artist being, I should admit to what I looked like before it: a fearsome girl who wants to draw? No, I am actually serious. I am good at urban sketching, I have some classical realism and really good art teachers in my art case history, yet, as years passed by, my fear of art grew and so did my desire to continue to make art – better art. I know this does not sound very logical, but now I am aware that many artists come face to face with that fear – a numbing, dull substance depriving you of artistic confidence. Technically, this was the main reason why I showed up at the doors of the first mentor-protégée meeting.

To be honest, I did not have any expectations of the program, I was only very curious to see if I could find a mentor who would understand me – and I did. I found Claudia [*Claudia Poser, terracotta ceramic artist*] – the imperturbable, wise, funny, inquisitive and far-seeing artist, who not only helped me work harder on my art and explore (and push!) the boundaries of my artistic self, but also dealt with my fears and anxieties, and laughed at my ‘agony’ of trying to figure out whether I should actually draw leg hair on semiabstract male legs and feet surrounding a tiny female figure in a collage.

I think the great thing about being able to work with a mentor is the ability to share your art with someone genuinely interested in it as well as in helping you to grow and in facing, and banishing your fears. And, that someone stays by your side for two years – if you are willing to work, of course. When I joined the program, I had a vague idea of what I wanted and what I could become, but it truly started to shape up only after a year or so. I would say, my focus and direction in art did not change, but expanded and deepened, since I already knew what I did not want, but felt lost and confused about where to direct my efforts. These two years provided me with a platform to firmly stand on, good friends and artistic confidence.

I don't really know where my today's art path would take me, but I certainly feel that the courage I gained will not vanish – and this seems enough to move on and be honest with myself.

Denise Minkler Marych's WARM Story

Protégée of Marcia Soderman-Olson

Before I entered this program, I was isolated as an artist and lacked confidence in my abilities. There were many years in my life in which I had stopped creating, and I was struggling with shame around my lack of productivity. I continued to carry around past creative wounds that were counter-productive. In short, I had difficulty respecting my own journey.

I had heard about the Mentor program a few years earlier through Deborah Foutch, while participating in her Artist's Way group. On a leap of faith, I decided that I was ready to dive into this, headfirst. I yearned to experience a close, working relationship with a professional artist who could serve as a role model. Realizing how inextricably linked my artistic growth is to my self-growth, I felt I needed (and deserved) the nurturing I believe is needed to fully blossom as an artist. I hoped to find someone to provide constructive criticism versus destructive – someone who could build up instead of tear down.

Well, I gained so much more than I could ever have hoped for. “I feel as if I won the lottery!”— this is what I began telling people who asked about my experience in the program, particularly by being paired with Marcia Soderman-Olson.

Almost immediately with Marcie’s support, I began researching and experimenting with something I had been thinking about for years, but somehow didn't have the courage to do on my own. My time commitment in the studio increased and art making has become a habit.

And, gradually, in my own time, I started taking small steps toward becoming a more professional artist. To name just a few professional “firsts” for me: created a business card, created an online presence, wrote an artist’s statement (or two), participated in a group show with fellow protégées, joined a gallery and participated in two art crawls. I highly doubt I could have accomplished this on my own! In addition to my mentor, I have also learned so much from many of the strong, amazing, and talented fellow protégés who were a part of in this cycle.

Working with Marcie and participating in the mentor program has been a blessing and a gift. I couldn’t have asked for a more suited mentor. Her compassion, unwavering support, knowledge about art and life, and her constructive feedback have been invaluable to me. I can never thank her and the WARM program enough.

Through Marcie's respect for me as an artist and as a unique individual, I am much closer to my goals. The rest is up to me! Her warmth and encouragement will remain a part of me as I move forward on this artistic journey that I am proud to call my own.

Annie Hejny's WARM Story

Protégée of Deborah Foutch

In choosing to participate in WARM Mentor Program, I set high expectations to learn the truths of becoming a flourishing professional artist. The first truth I learned is that I must be grounded in an artistic community.

My mentor, Deborah Foutch brought me into a small group of artists with whom we shared book discussions and group exhibitions. Bimonthly meetings over two years, opened a consistent space for us to process art experiences and build supportive relationships. I now seek connections with other artists, both in WARM and through the Women's Art Institute at St. Catherine University, because I know it is necessary to have camaraderie to continue my work.

A second truth is to be committed to my studio practice. Through trial, error and experimentation, I am developing best habits for my art making.

Every month, I invited Deborah to my studio for a one-on-one meeting. In anticipation, I progressed in my paintings and prepared an agenda for our conversation. This time together was indispensable. I received practical knowledge about art professionalism, encouragement in my creative exploration, and critique for my developing body of work. It was clear that any concern I brought to Deborah would be respectfully considered and resolved with advice for subsequent steps.

The final truth is to trust my voice. Many questions arise when leaning into a serious art life; therefore, I am becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable.

At the closure of my WARM mentorship, I am ready to step out on my own. I have pockets full of new tools, techniques and expanded curiosity. I have a long list of exhibitions, commissions and proposals to complete. Where I was lacking focus and community, I am now abundant in clarity and connections. The Mentor Program was exactly what I needed as an emerging artist. It exceeded my initial expectations and I am grateful to have learned these truths.

Kat Corrigan's WARM Story

Mentor to Gena LaMothe

In my first year as a mentor, I've had the privilege of working with Gena LaMothe.

Gena came to WARM through a conversation with Farida Hughes, who was a mentor in a previous cycle, and the mentor program was a great fit for Gena at this point in her artistic growth.

Gena was looking for help in creating a foundation for building her artistic career and she came with great focus and drive. Her initial thinking was to begin her career with "money-making" art that she could sell at Art Fairs to fund her REAL love, which was to create her more conceptual work. Through conversations and her ability to commit herself to a schedule of creativity, Gena developed an entire body of work, *The Index Of The Written Spectrum*, which led to several showings of these book-related pieces. Gena was then able to concentrate on another conceptual series, which she has called *The Black Works*. This collection is currently on exhibition at Tractorworks Gallery in the North Loop of Minneapolis.

I do have to note that during the past two years of working with Gena, she has bought a house, changed jobs, lost a friend, and continued to stay true to her art.

Gena is an incredibly focused individual, able to discern her vision and enact it. I have been impressed with her professionalism and her devotion to her work. Gena's confidence and willingness to follow her own voice will continue to lead her to her next work.

Dianne Merten's WARM Story

Protegee of Michele Combs

After being a decorative painter for nearly 30 years, I decided to take my love of painting and finally do the kind of painting that was deep down in my soul--landscape paintings in oils. Before I knew of the WARM program, I had met Michele Combs as an instructor at the Minnetonka Center for the Arts. I was always awed by her work--her talent and experience with color and brushstrokes. I wanted to paint like that!. My first couple of years with oil painting was quite frustrating, since I have previously always painted with acrylics. Oils are a completely different animal, so I'd get frustrated trying to mix the colors I wanted, and then the picture became a greasy mess.

Then Michele introduced me to the WARM program. After careful consideration, I decided that joining the WARM Mentor Program was just the thing I needed to help me fulfill my artistic passions. Since then, Michele has said that my painting abilities have grown by leaps and bounds. Through her teaching, Michele has encouraged me to paint more and more in "Plein Air" style. At first, I was pretty intimidated, but with practice and encouragement, Michele has given me confidence and joy in the painting process. I have grown in the mixing of colors, am leaning to capture the light, and my own style is beginning to emerge. Michele's positive approach has guided me to help fulfill my goals. I am much more confident, my skills have improved, and I am happier with the results. Another great experience was my Critical Response session. The viewers of my work were so kind, complementary and positive. It has given me more confidence and inspiration to keep forging ahead. The WARM mentorship program has been a great experience, and I would recommend it to anyone! Thank you WARM!

Gena LaMothe's WARM Story

Protegee of Kat Corrigan

When I first started the WARM program I had been working with an idea for about a year and although my concept was well established, I had not been creating much art. I was working digitally at the time with the hopes of printing, but really wanted to turn my concept into 3-D painted works. I knew I wanted to start getting my art out to the public, but didn't know where to start.

My mentor, Kat Corrigan, helped me get the ball rolling. She was excited about the work I was doing and gave me the push I needed to start printing work and developing my paintings. In the summer of the first year she offered me the opportunity to show my work in a coffee shop that she is connected with. This experience of getting a show together and getting feedback on my work was incredible. Her guidance through each step of producing a show was exactly what I needed. I see this first show as a launching point. As my mentor and I reflected on this show, my work began to change. The pieces I was producing became stronger and better reflected my concepts both in medium and presentation. This opened the door for me to show my work in Minneapolis and Chicago.

One of the best things I have learned from being in this program is that my work will never be finished. My ideas have evolved and grown and become something so much more meaningful throughout this process. Having feedback, encouragement, and guidance from my mentor has given me the freedom to create better work and the courage put it out there.

Marcia Soderman-Olson's WARM Story

Mentor to Lisa Anderson Fratzke, Denise Minkler Marych and Sherry Sivo

I have had the privilege and joy of working with three highly talented artists who have become dedicated and productive professionals: (alphabetically) Lisa Fratzke, Denise Minkler Marych and Sherry Sivo. Each has worked hard to develop her artistic voice and unique style. What's more, each of them is a very fine woman, and in spite of the disciplined work required by being in the program, each has also faced challenging situations during their time in the program. Rather than quitting the program, they each have handled those situations courageously. Each has produced a fine body of work, with more completed work than can possibly be included in this exhibition. Brava to Sherry, Denise and Lisa! I enjoy and admire each of you very much as the fine women and fine artists you are. Thank you for giving me the very gratifying opportunity to work with you and to get to know you!

Carolina Borja's WARM Story

Protegee of Carolyn Halliday

Growth took an unexpected direction.

Two years ago I wrote a contract alongside my mentor Carolyn Halliday. The contract revealed the reasons I am passionate about creating art, the direction I would like to take, and my obstacles. It was with great enthusiasm that I translated them and created a 5- year plan. Much joy came out of planing and visualizing the possibilities. The real discovery came through the work itself. I obtained 90% of what I set my mind to. But, for my obstacles, it was quite revealing to see that they remained the same.

The obstacles I had once noticed took on a depth I did not expect. I was concerned about my technique, my content reaching the impact I desired, the amount of opportunities I wished to take on. In my mind, these challenges were what we would resolve in the 2 year program. What I discovered was that they didn't get resolved, but

rather grew deeper and bigger. Viewing and analyzing these challenges was like getting to know them personally, the understanding in myself and my art grew.

I slowly shifted my idea of success dependent on opportunities conquered, technique accomplished, and amount of bodies of work finished, and became more interested in digging deep into those challenges. Art made sense only if there was a challenge, an unknown, a vulnerable aspect that I couldn't quite measure. Growth went in a sort of inward direction, towards the core of it all. (A lovely coincidence was to see that the more I concentrated inward the more I accomplished on the outside.)

During this two-year program I received 2 grants to create artwork, 5 commissions, 2 art teaching positions, and participated in over 10 exhibitions. I am confident that the Mentor program allowed these opportunities, but most importantly, gave me enormous support through my amazing mentor and my protégée friends.

Anne Kramer's WARM Story

Protegee of Rochelle Woldorsky

I joined the WARM Mentor/Protégée program on a sort of whim. I had just finished the Women's Art Institute's summer intensive art program. I made great friends there and really enjoyed the time I spent working on my art, learning about women artists, and connecting with other like-minded women. Carolina Borja, who I met and admired from the program, suggested I do the Mentor program with her. After some thought, I decided that it would be the push I needed to continue my way into the art world. For me, I needed to "find an excuse" to continue my artistic momentum, and to "find credibility" for my artistic need.

Rochelle Woldorsky was my second choice for a mentor, and was assigned to me as my mentor. I was told that a lot of thought goes into the matching, and not to

worry about not getting my first choice. Rochelle had retired from teaching in the Art Department at the U of M, and I felt okay with the pairing. As it turns out, she was just what I needed.

Throughout the Mentor program, Rochelle and I critiqued my work, talked about art, artistic process, my confusion about art and money, my disillusionment with conceptual art, my lack of confidence in speaking about my art, her art, how my family fit into my art life,...etc.

Rochelle's guiding words, insightful first-hand art knowledge, and willingness to accept my intuitive and sometimes messy creative process provided the guidance I needed to find myself being confident in the art world. No excuses needed, I am an Artist!

Laura Burlis' WARM Story

Protegee of Layl McDill

When I read an email from Layl McDill on behalf of WARM almost two years ago, the sentence I remember that jumped out at me was "Are you ready to take your art to the next level?" I felt like it was directed personally to me, because that's exactly how I felt—like I needed to take my art to the next level.

Coincidentally, I already knew the mentor I was matched up with—the same Layl McDill!—through the Polymer Clay world, but even though we shared the same medium, I was excited to be working with her in the Mentor Program because of her wide knowledge of arts opportunities and her business sense and get-it-done attitude.

My time in the WARM program did not go much as I had visualized, as I had to deal with some other life situations that came up during this time period that took priority for a long time. But since life is always happening, the lessons I learned and am still learning about carving out time for my art practice will be used over & over again. Through the Mentor Program, I heard about an Artists's Way group forming, and this, too,

was really helpful in deepening my art practice, as well as getting to know the other group members. We culminated our group with a show, and are continuing to show together.

There were a lot of great things about working with a mentor, but definitely experiencing Layl's generosity of spirit was a highlight. She is a great cheerleader and gives a lot of herself, both one-to-one and in groups. She exceeded my expectations of what I could expect in the way of support, and I feel like just watching her in action is also a great role model for how to be in an art community with others. She also has a bottomless well of problem-solving ability, while at the same time she has a sheer joy in being an artist that is infectious. I feel very fortunate that I got to spend this time with her!

Jantje Visscher's WARM Story

Mentor to Kate Vinson

It is always fun to be a mentor—the growth, the expansion, watching the accomplishments and the satisfaction that goes with it, looking ahead to the future. These are all wonderful things to watch.

Having Kate Vinson as a protégée has been an amazing experience. She is always ready to try new things, and during this cycle she has taken quite a few workshops to learn new techniques. That has meant that every time we met (and that was every month) I have seen new weavings/sculpture that are unlike anything she has done before, and often unlike anything I have ever seen before. So assembly of ideas, parts, and themes, has been fun. Of course, eventually focus becomes an issue, but luckily Kate has been good at that, too.

Debra George's WARM Story

Protegee of Brenda Litman

Prior to starting the WARM Mentor Program, I didn't really know what it meant to be an artist. I'd studied art in college, took painting classes later and then, in the last few years, began working in polymer clay. I thought about painting again or at least finding new artistic inspiration. At the moment I signed up for the program, I had time to pursue art and felt ready.

Immediately after signing up, I became very involved in a business venture and couldn't imagine giving up either one. Fortunately, I was paired with a wonderfully supportive and understanding mentor, Brenda Litman. She guided me in a variety of artistic ways. Brenda kept me focused on my goals, teaching, encouraging and nurturing me along the way.

Brenda exceeded my expectations as a mentor. Her gentle, encouraging style paired with a firm focus on meeting my goals gave me new insights on what it meant for me to be an artist. I've had to conquer my impatience and look at artmaking as a process—having an overall vision, delving in and making adjustments all along the way. A lot of decisions. Trial and error. Picking a path. More adjustments.

The program also provided opportunities to meet other protégées. It was helpful to hear their perspectives and challenges, often similar to my own. The Critical Response sessions were very instructive, opening up new worlds of thinking and creating. It's been a wonderfully challenging journey. One I never would have started or finished on my own. Brenda carried me through hard times, kept me focused and positively encouraged me along the way. I always look forward to time with Brenda; she teaches me so much.

I have a new perspective and deeper respect for all artists from this experience. While I feel more like an artist than I did before starting the program, I now have a better idea of what I need to do to continue my artistic journey.