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~In every walk of life~

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why Genealogy

Why Art? Why Not Art?

by Robert Brusic

Many years ago, when I was serving a parish in New Haven, Connecticut. I frequently took my days off to travel to New York to haunt different art museums. After one of these trips, one of my interns, who was a bundle of honest curiosity, asked “Why art? Why take a perfectly good day off and the trouble and expense to tromp through various museums two hours away by train?”

After an embarrassed and extended moment for reflection, the only answer I could give to his query was: “Well, why not art?”

Later, when I thought about that conversation, I began to realize how art plays a significant role in all our lives – and in mine in particular – even if we are not always aware of it. First, art gives us a sense of how historical people and places looked. Second, art is used to advertise and sell products. Third, art (in museums, in art books and even on the sides of many downtown buildings) conveys messages and meaning for urban life.

Like many people, I have also seen how art can be pressed into service of propaganda – exhibits at the The Museum of Russian Art have demonstrated that. In my own field, I have seen how religious imagery can be made to demonstrate religious truths and feelings. These interpretations range all the way from sentimental images like those of Werner Sallman to the sturdy depictions of doctrine in the works of Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Dürer.

Furthermore, art is used as investment and display of wealth. I approach the edge of cynicism every time I read in the New York Times that a work of art has sold for many millions of dollars. In spite of my cynicism, I find endless fascination in reading about art theft (such as the Gardner heist of 1990) and art fakes. Some pundits have reckoned that about forty percent of the art now hanging in museums and private collections is either faked or forged.

But these observations don’t quite explain why art fascinates me. When I ask myself why, a number of past incidents are particularly memorable. These moments have been special and unexpected; and they have deepened my appreciation of art.

Art has not always been a significant part of my life. I cannot recall any great art on the walls where I grew up in Passaic, New Jersey, although I do have a vague memory of a small pleasing print of a landscape with lots of grassy greens and watery blues. It hung in the bathroom.

Later, I recall a significant encounter in the Art Institute of Chicago. While I was a Danforth Fellow at Lake Forest College, I had opportunity to stroll through the galleries of the AIC. On one occasion, I was wandering through the galleries of some admirable paintings: Monet, Pissarro, Signac, and the like. Like most museum goers, I glanced at a particular picture, paused to read the label, took another look at the work, and moved on.

Going through the doorway into the next gallery, however, was like stepping into another world. I took a few steps before turning around to see what was on the wall behind me. It was Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon on the Isle of Grande Jatte. I had seen this picture reproduced in art books long before Steven Sondheim turned the painting into a musical. Seeing the pointillist painting up close and in full size and color took my breath away.

I was alone in the gallery, so I disturbed no one with my muted “Holy cow, look at that.” I must have stared at the picture for twenty minutes, looking at the spectacular work from different angles. I tried to register the awesome up-close reality of all those hardworking dots: all those relaxing characters on a Sunday in the park and that explosion of color. That experience changed the way I look at paintings. I now believe that art has the power to astonish.
Two separate but related occasions that fostered a deeper affection for art are the two chapters of a story I refer to as “A Tale of Two Ladies.”

Chapter 1: During my early years at Dartmouth College, I sometimes addressed my loneliness by taking long walks. On one occasion, I found myself roaming through the college’s small art gallery in Carpenter Hall. I was greeted by a proper lady at the desk. She seemed to sense that I knew nothing about art, so, because there was no one else in the gallery, she kindly showed me around.

Trailing the scent of floral perfume that ladies of a certain age sometimes wear, she led me through the gallery to look especially at a painting by John Sloan. (Sloan, I found out later, was one of the artists in The Eight, also known as the Ash Can School.) The painting, titled “McSorley’s Back Room,” (1912), was a brown study of an elderly man sitting at a dimly lit table, vacantly looking into space and nursing a tankard of beer. My self-appointed docent left me to ponder the work, which I did. I left with a new perspective on early twentieth century American art and undergraduate loneliness.

Chapter 2: Some twenty years later, while serving a parish in Philadelphia, I had occasion to visit the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where there happened to be an exhibition of John Sloan’s art. It was like coming home in a way, especially when I came across the elderly fellow with his tankard of beer, still peering vacantly into space. While I was getting reacquainted with my old friend, a woman in a green dress appeared at my elbow, inquiring if and why I liked that particular painting. Since there was no one else in the gallery, I told her about my abiding affection for John Sloan’s art, this work in particular. I think she liked my story, because she told me a number of things about the artist — including the fact that she was John Sloan’s widow!

Now, whenever I get a whiff of floral perfume or come across a woman who can tell stories about art and artists, I think of those two ladies who helped me see art as having the power to surprise.

One more story. While serving as pastor at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, one of my responsibilities was overseeing the acquisition and display of art. From time to time, a particular art collector, Jerry Evenrud — who subsequently became a close friend — stopped by to chat about art in general and about works of art pertaining to the Prodigal Son in particular. He was a major collector of the latter subject. Eventually he invited me and my wife to lunch at his house, where he had art depicting the Prodigal Son art in every room, including his bathroom.

After a year or so of these conversations, Jerry proposed that I select about fifty of his works and write brief essays about each one of them. So, from time to time, over a period of two years he would stop by my house and drop off a work or two to help me write the essays. I always enjoyed those fortnights at home with the art.

Eventually the essays were collected and matched with the appropriate works of art in a book entitled And Grace Will Lead Me Home. The book won a brace of awards and became the catalogue for an exhibition at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York. Now the country’s foremost collection of art related to the Prodigal Son resides at Luther Seminary; and the book can still be acquired at Amazon. I remember that experience with great warmth. Art created a friendship and broadened my vision, in addition to affirming beauty and meaning.

One of my favorite characters in fiction, Sherlock Holmes, once cautioned his friend Watson not only to look around him but also to see what was before him. Over the course of my adult life, I have looked at and seen a great deal of art. I have come to know people associated with the arts, like Jerry Evenrud, Myron Kunin, the Chinese artist, He Qi, and the great serigraph artist, John August Swanson.

Now, as I continue to look at and read about art, I find myself visiting and revisiting some new questions and some old questions: Why do people steal art? Why do people pay exorbitant sums of money for a painting? If it is beautiful, does it matter if it is a forgery?

I still wonder what is going on in some abstract and post-modern art. What makes that pile of rocks in my backyard merely a pile of rocks while a similar pile of rocks in a museum is regarded as a work of art?

Continued on Page 7, Why Art? Why Not Art?
As a young poet, I remember reading *Poetics* by Aristotle. I wanted to follow, unerringly, the authority of the ancients and their dictums on the writing of poetry. How to write a review of Joseph A. Amato’s poetry book: *DIAGNOSTICS: POETICS OF TIME*?

It is an intriguing title, but what is preface, and what is denouement of this volume of poetry? This is one of three published books of poetry Amato has composed, although his writing credits in non-fiction are considerable. The poem restores the core yearning of poetry to be shared, published and words heard. Joseph Amato reaches his readers on this almost pilgrimage including pieces of his own personal history.

Diagnostics: What is this to a historian? Amato is not a medical doctor, but has a Ph.D. in history and here, is engaged in writing poetry. The inaugural poem of the volume, “Prelude”, announces: “(Names) carry us out of dark places. (They) are the Communion of Being”. These poems, being on marriage and the experiences of a life-long journey, are not unlike Chaucer’s tales and are (poems of pilgrimage) presented as a passage of shared time and movement. The collection occupies a progression in the lifetime of a serious writer. The stage is set.

Amato’s voice is almost casual, almost conversational yet potent: “As if alive forever in its death.” Its end is in its beginning.

The rush of poetry inspired me, stirred me on my second reading, as the collection is almost a guide to the human experience of art but in literary ideation and imagery and the individual expression of the experience of this writer in archetypal strains. But this is not the reason to read the volume.

There is no stuffiness in the tone, rather a primordial archetypal tune spun like skeins of wool dyed in various colors and stitched, binding the reader in his/her own poem in a pattern of reaction to a subliminal emotion. In order to follow the thread, one has to agree like tenses. There is a combination of word order that precipitates the readers’ expressions as well. I was engaged with this poetry in my own story. Penciled in are my own word graffiti-like lines that can be seen still on train cars. My volume of Diagnostics Poetics of Time is bombarded with penciled-in notes. Beside my focus as a reviewer, poetry was spilling out of myself – the presence of the author/teacher induced my occupation as poet, like a gift perhaps given by the shared Creator whose presence is interwoven into a continuum of time, space, motion and emotion throughout. I really dig Amato’s poetry.

The first two sections speak of the relationship between what are our certainties and our uncertainties?

The initial poem speaks of “Cottonwood Seed,” and it seems it was the “seed” of this trek we begin as well. He praises spring and creation and starts this process of creativity like spring’s young emergence. Amato uses the words of “silk canopy”. Yet, I have thought cottonwood seeds exploding and taking habitation in my screen doors and windows, annoying only since childhood, slipped away. I am challenged to open my mind to a poetry imagining a single activity in nature and remembering what these seeds heralded, by the child in me. I harvested these seeds and fed them to my “dolly” as medicine (probably ate a few myself).

Turning the page, “A Dead Cardinal” is preface to the bookend and backdrop of “How
random the death of beauty/And how random the beauty of death.”

The reality, boosted by these two lines, defines the cycle of natural life which moves us on to the certainty of these ideas. He gives examples and attaches his focus of “A Moment, A Morning” on the beginning and the end. Time is introduced as thematic of the collection, “Poetics of Time”. Its end is in its beginning. A blending of the issues of death and life, transposed to seed, normalcy and medical diagnostics. The elements blend like cancers. What kind of and which image is first? As we explore the experience of childhood (“Lake Breeze” and “At Aunt Mabel’s Cottage”) the narrator of the poem expounds on the passing of childhood and immersion into the rumple of experience. The Blakean adventure, “Songs of Innocence and Experience” is a reminder of poetry’s attitude toward the human span in poetic language so we can feel it, perhaps.

Poetics, what is this to a Historian? Maybe it is the bite of the aesthetic and the grammar of necessity. It is a gathering of disparate elements into the relevance of the whole wonderful product. So I am going to look at the end cluster, leaving the middle of Joseph Amato’s book as a suggestion, a prompt, until I finish much like one builds the frame of a house, before the electricity comes in. Though that is not the end.

Amato turns to prose in the last phase of this book of sensate poetry. It is as though he might need to explain the preceding poems. And, I enjoyed the prose, the memoir of “real” time. Certainly, it inured me to him as a human being, and I could sympathize with the actual experience of his life and the family origin and NOW in present time. “Everything we think, make, and love has an end.” These are juxtaposed to each beginning and end, from NOW and to WHEN, the prognosis. “…Now is ever rife with Next.”

He concludes that medicine is a necessary evil and that he owes his life to medicine. This passage includes a serious marking of time, due to health issues, but he reconciles himself and his need to take care of medical realities. Medicine “has mollified pain, given the suffering hope, and driven remorseless and adventitious death from the door.” This end-piece talks of temporality and death, gratitude and health, and, I add, good writing! He is sharing himself in skewered intimacies with his readers: “I assume that time baffles. Surely the past is not fully read, the present understood, or the future written by our design.” And “diagnosis and prognosis (are) bound by guess and surprise.”

Amato has had his struggles with diagnostics, poetics of time and concludes in the poem, “Conversion to Medicine Tells” that, “I entered a religious order/praying to be spared pain now/and ever after.” We’ve entered his poems again in the last words of the book.

I think that the conclusion of a poem should answer the question posed by its title. And this book of poems by Joseph Amato accomplishes that and much more and will certainly live on through time…and whatness. It is a text “rife” with possibility and pain and I think one should read it, relate to it and write from it.

~Libby Casey Irwin is a poet, who earned her M.F.A. in Writing from Hamline University. Some of her poems have been published in various literary journals. She has four manuscripts of poetry (as yet unpublished) and was a finalist in the Mentor Series of the Loft Literary Center, where she is a member. Libby writes about family and is an advocate of writers who suffer with emotional challenges.

Correction:
The June 2017 issue of The Minnesota Scholar stated the volume number incorrectly. It should have read Volume 12, Number 1, June 2017.
Editor's Perspective

A Meeting of Minds
by Evelyn D. Klein

It was at the Loft Literary Center, which was still located at the old church building on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis, that Shirley Whiting and I met. She joined the open poetry group I facilitated there at the time. Well attended, the group primarily consisted of men. When Shirley joined, her poetry added another dimension, impressive with its insight, depth and beauty. It became an inspiration to many in the group. Her description of “the purple finch clouds” is still etched on my mind. When, after the meetings, the group adjourned to a local restaurant for shop talk and a meal, Shirley often spoke of the Minnesota Jung Association, where she was a member and found inspiration.

Long before we met, Shirley connected with this organization that would shed light on her life, centering around her own early and difficult life as a child, the second oldest in the family. Since I was the second oldest child in my family as well, we frequently compared notes, and though circumstances were somewhat different, caused by the early death of her older brother, we found much in common.

Not surprisingly, Shirley sought out organizations that dealt with the complexities of life, from personal to world issues and current events. Thus, she had become a long-time member of the Minnesota Jung Association, where she was active for many years, where she attended lectures and seminars, where she joined study groups, taught a class on writing, and collected friends. Having read Jung’s The Undiscovered Self, I was happy to accept, years later, her invitation to join the organization. In deference to her fascination with psychological types and her dedication to the organization, the Minnesota Jung Association is planning a program on the topic in one of its upcoming programs for 2018.

Gradually, Shirley stopped frequenting the poetry group, and we lost track of each other. Then one Sunday, we ran into each other again at a Thoreau Society event at the Open Book Performance Hall on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis, an event associated with the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum. We immediately reconnected, and I was once more struck by her ebullient, inclusive personality. We, briefly, caught up with each other. On hearing of my completed poetry book manuscript, she said: “Then you’ll need a publisher.” And she, promptly introduced me to a publisher present among the attendees, the one who eventually published my first book. At the end of the event, we promised to keep in touch, and so we did ever since.

Shirley, above all, was a people person, an ambassador of goodwill who created a sense of community and inclusiveness among members and newcomers alike in organizations of which she was a member, the Minnesota Jung Association and the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum prominently among them. She would introduce herself to newcomers and then introduce them to other members. Not only that but by telling each person something of interest about the other, she established new connections between them. In her heavy tote bag, she kept a little journal, where she made her notes.

It should come as no surprise that Shirley would draw me into her circle of activities. For one, we had much to talk about. Shirley deplored small talk, as she so often asserted. Above all, we enjoyed talking about current events and education. We both had a professional background in education, I in
English and world languages and Shirley in library science, along with an abiding interest in early childhood education. The latter was among her great preoccupations over the years.

Shirley had a close relationship with her sons and their families with whom she spent considerable time. Undoubtedly, her grandchildren were an inspiration in her on-going interest in early childhood education, where she attended regular meetings on the topic to stay current. Most recently, she had, also, joined a group called Grandmothers for Peace.

She often addressed the topic of STEM, and its present preoccupation in the public sphere. Because technology on all levels is such an important part of our lives, she felt the expression of ideas and thoughts in writing and the arts held an equally important place in personal and cultural growth right alongside STEM. For that reason, coupled with the troubles in the world today, she advocated for an approach of “STEAM,” including the arts for a well-rounded and balanced approach to life.

In the educational vein, she also talked about learning styles and psychological types. A great believer in Meyers-Briggs, she, at one point confided, laughing, that in one of her tests, she scored as a general. If a general is about leadership, organization, and action, the description was not far-fetched.

Shirley was a long-time member of The Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum, where many of her ideas found expression. She served as president, wrote articles and book reviews for the journal, and remained a board member and membership chair right to the end. Sometime during our reconnection, she convinced me to join the Scholars and its board as well.

The friendship between Shirley and me was cemented by regularly meeting for dinner before evening meetings of MJA and for lunch after the morning meetings of MISF, where we set the world on its axis. Our lunches and discussions, in time, expanded as Shirley drew more members into the circle of discussion that became as important to us as the events themselves.

Ambassador of goodwill, Shirley Whiting always created a sense of community among those present. She was an inspiring spirit who filled a room with positive energy. Knowing Shirley was like being part of an expanding world of thought, learning, creativity, and empowerment. Her interests and involvements were constructive and contagious. Not only was she a valued member of organizations, but she was a thinker and writer, who wrote a novel (which she, unfortunately never published), poetry and essays. Shirley’s connection to other people and the world was deep and abiding. She was a friend for life. She passed away August 26, 2017.

~Evelyn D. Klein has an M.S. in English, taught in the public schools, at Century College and is a Loft teaching artist. A writer/speaker/artist, she is a writing consultant and author of three books of poetry, essays and art, From Here Across the Bridge (with art by Wolfgang Klein), Once upon a Neighborhood, and Seasons of Desire.

Why Art? Why Not Art? Continued from Page 3

And where are the works of women artists? (I confess that I have developed a docent tour on “Women of Mystery and History.”)

Nonetheless, in answer to the question, why art? After much of my life I would still respond: Why not art?

~Robert Brusic is a retired Lutheran pastor who is now a docent at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. He plays the baritone horn in several bands and is, also, an aficionado of Sherlock Holmes.
In a State of Conception
by Evelyn D. Klein

It is easy to become disoriented hiking in the woods, especially in conversation, even in a state park, unless we keep the lake of our inspiration in clear view.

And so, between spruce and pine, oak and maple, juniper, willow, and prickly underbrush, we are but one of the creatures roaming.

Minnesota lies dotted with woods and lakes, mythology and reality, oasis of the scholarly-minded, where dreamers, thinkers, seekers, creators, and more converge, if you know where to look, and I am but one of them.

Every dream and conception carries an insignia of approach, as divergent as you or I, or a hand-written signature, if we still know how to write, or a thumb print, if we are still young enough to have one, from science to art, mathematics to sports, engineering to linguistics, perception to realization, and on and on for us to grow into existence.

This journey through the countryside from idea to progress and re-thought bears undertaking on behalf of growing into our skins, where STEM is now firmly planted, but STEAM rises beyond tree tops.

Words to Ponder

From Edward Gibbon, History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume I, Chapter IX

…the use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages incapable of knowledge or reflection. Without that artificial help, the human memory soon dissipates or corrupts the ideas entrusted to her charge; and the nobler faculties of the mind, no longer supplied with models or with materials, gradually forget their powers; the judgment becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid or irregular. Fully to apprehend this important truth, let us attempt, in an improved society to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the illiterate peasant. The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses but very little his fellow-laborer, the ox, in the exercise of his mental faculties. The same, and even a greater, difference will be found between nations than between individuals; and we may safely pronounce, that without some species of writing, no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable acts of life.

~Submitted by Bill McTeer
At the annual meeting, President Steven Miller indicated that MISF is about scholarship and the sharing of interests with others.

Annual Reports
President Steven Miller gave a brief report of the activities of MISF, including:

- Fiscal Agency is one of the important activities in the administration of grants. One currently involves the Booth Memorial Hospital project and a second, a book on the history of MISF.
- Study Groups with active participation were the History Group and the Philosophy Group.
- Summer Events scheduled were the MIA tour, August 3 and the picnic, August 26.

Treasurer Bill McTeer gave his report, indicating:
- An annual budget of $2,500.
- Expenses of $2,355, involving primarily the journal, speaker honoraria, refreshments and on-line expenses

Editor of *TMS* encouraged members to send in their submissions before the October 6, 2017 deadline. Topics include “Why Genealogy” or a scholarly passion, articles of general interest, and a book review.

Elections
Elections of Board positions were held for three openings. Three nominations were placed on the ballot:
- Lucy Brusic
- Evelyn Klein
- Mike Woolsey

Nominations were moved for acceptance by Bill McTeer and seconded by Bob Brusic. Nominations were unanimously approved by the membership present.

The regularly scheduled program followed the meeting.

On the Road: Motor Camping in the 1920s
Presented by Lucy Brusic

Using old photos and a postcard diary, Lucy Brusic discussed automobile camping in the 1920s in an informal, lighthearted approach as it related to her father and his friend.

She pointed out that while trains had been the main means of transportation across the country, the coming of the automobile changed all that. It was now possible by anyone interested to explore the country on their own, particularly if they owned an automobile which gave them greater flexibility. And it soon became clear, automobiles were here to stay.

But this was before the days of the carefully laid-out maps, unless they were railroad routes. It was, also, before the days of roadside motels and
resorts or even cross country paved roads. So an automobile tour was an adventure of sorts, usually on dirt roads in wide open country that required a tent for overnights.

From Tennessee, at the foot of the Smokey Mountains, Lucy Brusic’s father, William McTee and his friend, Dr. Wilson, set out in 1923 in a Model T Ford to travel around Lake Michigan. In those days, no driver’s license was required. Lucy still has the lists of what he took on the trip which included a tent without a floor.

For twenty-nine days, they travelled around Wisconsin, making sixty-five miles per day. On Sundays, they often went to church, being devout Presbyterians. The roads were marked by posts with yellow strips around them. But the dirt roads were hard on the truck, and that resulted in much time spent changing tires and other frequent car troubles.

They got as far as northern Michigan, but the trip turned out too extensive to go around Lake Superior. They were pulled out of a hole in northern Michigan. When they had a blow-out, they had to have the car towed. And McTee called the car “an instrument of torture.” At night, they slept on the ground in their tent, despite Dr. Wilson’s advanced age.

A year after the Michigan trip, they went to see Civil War Sites, 1,100 miles away. They traveled, this time, in a Ford sedan with a back seat with McTee driving. They went on to Nashville, visited the Hermitage, and on to Pulaski, Tennessee, where her grandfather was mustered. They went on to Savannah, Tennessee, visiting Shiloh Field. Her grandfather had been on the Union side.

In 1924 Mr. McTee and Dr. Wilson traveled to Georgia and on to Florida. They traveled in August and had a slightly better car, this time, with fewer complaints. They particularly liked Florida, where they went to St. Augustine, visited a catholic church and then Daytona. Unfortunately, in Florida Mr. McTee lost his suitcase.

All the while the travelers were gone, Aunt Ava took care of things at home.

Lucy Brusic brought along some historical books on the art of motor camping for her audience to peruse: Modern Gypsies, Mary C. Bedell, 1924; Motor Camping, J.C. Long and John D. Long, 1926; The Comping Book, Elon Jessup, 1921.

August 3, 2017

Art Hot and Cold:
Works that Reflect Nature’s Moods and Human Temperament
Led by Robert Brusic

On the evening of August 3, a group of MISF enthusiasts gathered at the Minneapolis Institute of Art for another exciting one-hour tour led by Bob Brusic. It was especially planned for the Scholars. Bob, an MIA docent, has a creative way of looking at art by theme and, at the same time, eliciting a “hidden” story from it. Concentrating on the theme of “hot and cold,” he not so much explained the art to his audience as he drew, with carefully placed questions, interpretations from them. He, thereby, not only kept us engaged but demonstrated that it is possible to return to the same works of art time and again and find different meanings in them, depending on how we view and interpret them.

Thanks to Bob, this was another wonderful and enriching MISF field trip.
The original task for this presenter was to bring costume design to Shakespeare plays, particularly King Henry the Fourth, for modern audiences. In Shakespeare’s time, political entertainments were very popular, as evidenced by Shakespeare’s chronicled writings of Richard II and Richard III.

The Elizabethan stage comprised a rectangle that fanned out to a dirt floor with balconies upstairs. The stage had one trap door, and upstage were two doors for entrance and exits. The stage house had two levels, an apron and open gallery, with the top gallery reserved for the musicians. The stage was open air with a flag on a flag pole. In time however, the Puritans tore down the Shakespeare theater. The Shakespearean stage was eventually brought to America. The Chicago Shakespeare theater has 510 seats. Modern theater versions have more entry points for actors to fill the stage quickly. Shakespeare’s plays, up to the Victorian era, were performed in contemporary dress. There were no black actors or women actors in Shakespeare’s plays.

In the early 20th century, there was interest in presenting the plays in modern dress. At the same time, the cinema became another outlet for historical plays. A living history for the grubby look in battle scenes became the preferred look over a more polished version, as represented by British actor/director Sir Laurence Olivier.

With the historical past in mind, the question was posed: “Are we to be historical or bring in a more modern look?” Chicago Shakespeare Theater artistic director Barbara Gaines indicated she wanted the production to have a feeling of history but to have modern dress. This became a big challenge for the costume designers, who began by asking the question: “What is the story we want to tell?” Henry IV is about the education of a king.

Interestingly, an Italian fashion magazine gave Johnson ideas about black leather slacks. He needed to prepare for two kingly roles, father king and prince of Whales. He decided to use different colors to associate with each. For a dress, inspiration came from a catalog, beginning as a mini-dress which was morphed into a long dress with sleeves, all made out of leather. This presented challenges in sewing, gluing and applying grommets.

Another challenge arose in terms of lighting. Lighting can kill costumes. Lavenders and purples turned grey, something that was not expected right from the start.

Further, a problem occurred with the use of padding built on a Lycra body suit. The character of Falstaff became unconscious during rehearsals, at one point, because of the heat of the outfit. That, consequently, discouraged the addition of more fat to the costume.

Then there were the granny shirts in thrift shops which had to be a natural fabric. They were dyed and made into different patterns. Other female costumes were made from shifts with leather bustiers.

Finally, it was decided to use period dress for historic events.

As far as production was concerned, battle tunics and court robes were done in New York. The rest of the costumes were made in their own shops. Virgil Johnson supervised both groups in this successful undertaking, praised both in the Chicago and London presses.
Taking Sides with the Sun
by Dale Schwie

Longtime member, Dale Schwie, talked about his new book, Taking Sides with the Sun, where he researched the work of landscape photographer Herbert W. Gleason. Schwie’s interest in Gleason surfaced through his own work as a professional photographer and chairman of the Minnesota Thoreau Society.

Herbert Gleason’s career path developed in some unforeseen directions. Born in Massachusetts, he attended college and then theological seminary, after which he became a congregational minister. His first mission was to build a new church building. He, then, served churches in Pelican Rapids and the Twin Cities.

In 1883 he married a woman of extraordinary talent. She was a musician and artist who was to figure importantly in his career in years to come.

Eventually, Gleason became editor of a congregational newspaper, the Northwestern Congregationalist Denominational Newspaper that in 1894 changed its name to The Kingdom.

This opened new possibilities for Gleason, and in the late 1890s, he began to experiment with photography. He began to merge his interest in Thoreau with outdoor photography, as he became familiar with Thoreau’s journals. Since in 1899 a lawsuit put The Kingdom out of business, he decided to take a vacation and to regroup. For a time, he worked as a court reporter.

He reinvented himself once more, from minister to photographer. Consequently, he traveled across America photographed, illustrated books, and lectured to large audiences. His landscape photographs are gaining recognition in our time, including Thoreau Country, The Western Wilderness of North America, and photographs of Walden Pond.

Soon, Gleason’s work became in intricate production. Mrs. Gleason would color some of his photographs, which at that time, came only in black and white. Then, Gleason wanted to do a book of fifty images. Yet Houghton Mifflin wanted to do a special edition of Thoreau’s work, twenty volumes, illustrated with Gleason photos, published under Thoreau’s name. In 1917, Gleason came out with his own book, Through the Years with Thoreau. Despite everything, Gleason did not consider himself a professional photographer but saw himself simply as an amateur.

Yet Gleason finished a special set of books with 1,000 photos for Houghton Mifflin. It was leather bound and rebound in the 1940s. Gleason also illustrated other books, such as John Muir’s.

Eventually, he remained in Concord, where he photographed and lectured. He put together a Thoreau map of all places. He contributed two articles to National Geographic and wrote many other articles. He died in 1937.

His images were later brought to the Concord Library. And in 1941 the Thoreau Society showed his slides. In 1955 the library bought more of his images and organized a multivenu of Gleason’s work. In this first biography of Herbert Gleason’s work, Schwie uses a quote from the photographer, “Taking Sides with the Sun,” as his title.

Conservation on the Norther Plains, A Searching Conversation
Presented by Anthony Amato and William Hoffman

On Saturday, November 18th, the Scholars welcomed Professor and editor Anthony Amato from Southwest Minnesota State University and science and history writer William Hoffman of the University of Minnesota to present
their new work *Conservation on the Northern Plains: New Perspectives.*

Anthony, the first speaker, called attention to the vastness of the plains and prairie and its many diverse ecological zones, reaching from Minnesota to Montana and from northern Texas and New Mexico to the Canadian Prairie Provinces. He illustrated the variety and history of distinct forms of conservation on the Northern Plains with reference to eleven essays in the book that treat grasses, cattle ranching, wild horses, perception of wolves, farming in the 1930s in Iowa, and the tale of the American and Canadian plains. True to the title of his own essay, he talked about the history and plight of the honeybee, the pheasant (a recent induction), as well as matters as divergent as lake politics and ethanol.

William Hoffman made a unique Minnesota contribution to a discussion of conservation with his original piece on Minnesota conservation; and more precisely, “The Tallgrass Prairie: Raymond Lindeman and the Birth of Ecosystems Ecology.” He showed how a young native rural Minnesota in the late 1930s joined the transformation of the natural sciences by connecting material and biological realms and the smallest units of nature and animals at the level of energy flow as shown by his personal study of history of a geologic wet.

Our member and father of Anthony, Joseph, who briefly introduced the day talk, concluded it, underlining the continuing varieties of conservation, from trees, parks, and buffalo to its far more recent concerns to grasses, soils, and ultimately the biosphere. He, further, underlined how conservation as thought and sensibility increasingly belongs to the most advanced laboratory sciences, and matters of atomic and molecular poisoning.

This opened the door to an energetic and stimulating conversation about surprises, conundrums, and dilemma of human efforts to improve their place on the earth. With hinges in such matters as introduction of DDT, Strontium 90, and thalidomide drugs, Anthony and William responded to larger questions and statements about what are we introducing and what are we actually preserving. The issue of global warming and climate change asked of nature’s survival.

The worth of our conversation about conservation and the value of this book is captured by a handful of quotations from a most recent review in *Soil Conservation.*

For a recent Minneapolis radio interview with Anthony and Joseph, listen to Tom O’Connell, *Truth to Tell Archives, KFAI, Nov. 13, 2017,*

http://civicmediaminnesota.org/truthtotell/podcasts/

Joseph Amato

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**Upcoming Events**

**Saturday, January 27, 2018**

*Minneapolis’ Murdered Editors: A Look at Investigative Journalists and the Underworld in the Early 20th Century*

**Presenter: Beth Johanneck**

Beth Johanneck grew up in southwestern Minnesota, working summers in the field. She has a B.S. degree in business administration with a finance concentration and currently works for Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park.

She is an amateur historian and hosted a blog called *Minnesota Country Mouse* for seven years, leading to a book contract with the History Press for her first book, *Hidden History of the Minnesota River Valley* as well as for her second book, *Twin Cities Prohibition.* She self-published *Minneapolis Underworld* at the request of a local organized crime member. *Twin Cities Prohibition* was mentioned on MPR as one of the three top food books of 2011.

Johanneck is currently working on a fictional history of Henry Sibley and book of fiction about a Minnesota farm family during the Great Depression, tentatively entitled *Bittersweet.*
Saturday, February 24, 2018
*From Winnipeg to New Orleans: the Route of the Jefferson Highway in Minnesota*
**Presenter:** Carol Ahlgren
Carol Ahlgren is an architectural historian in the Twin Cities. She received a 2017 Legacy Fellowship from the Minnesota Historical Society to study the highway’s history and route through Minnesota.

Saturday, March 24, 2018
*The Weight of Silence: Unwed Mothers at the Salvation Army Booth Memorial Hospital in Midcentury America (or History, My Mother and Me)*
**Presenter:** Kim Heikkila

Kim Heikkila’s mother was one of these women. She delivered her first daughter, Heikkila’s half sister at Booth in 1961, surrendered her for adoption and kept it secret for 33 years.

Heikkila has a Ph.D. in American Studies from UWM. She wrote about Booth Memorial Hospital for *Ramsey County History* and *Minnesota History*. She published several essays about her mother’s experience as a birth mother and her own as an adoptive mother. She recently completed an oral history project with former Booth residents, staff and related personnel, the second of two research projects sponsored by the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum with funding from the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage grants. Her first book, *Sisterhood of War: Minnesota Women in Vietnam*, was a finalist in the 2012 Minnesota Book Award. She taught U.S. and women’s history at local colleges and universities before leaving academia to open her own oral history consulting business, Spotlight Oral History.

Saturday, April 28, 2018
*Minnesota Muslims – Up Close*
**Presenter:** Tamim Saidi
Muslims have been part of Minnesota since the 19th century, so why are we just noticing them now? The speaker will examine the diversity and unity of the Muslim experience in the Land of a Thousand Lakes. Tamim Saidi, has been active in describing Islam and the Muslim culture and way of life. This is your chance to hear what being a Muslim is like in the land of Lutherans and how Minnesota Nice plays out with an increasingly visible religious group [sic]. This is a chance to ask question about one of the largest of the world’s religions. You can even be politically incorrect [sic].

Tamim Saidi has worked with the Islamic Resource Group, is on the advisory board to CAIR-MN, and is president of a mosque in Plymouth. He is a doctor of pharmacy and works as consultive pharmacist.

Saturday, May 26, 2018
*Annual Poetry Day*
**Introduction:** Evelyn Klein
**Presenters:** Joseph Amato, Emilio De Garcia, Lee Landau
The reading will be preceded by a brief discussion of the use of metaphor in poetry, presented by Evelyn Klein, poet, teaching artist, and author of three books of poetry, essays, and art.

**Joseph Amato** will read from his new book, *Diagnostics: Poetics of Time*. This is his third book of poetry. A Sicilian American from Detroit, Michigan, he has written multiple forms of intellectual and cultural history, including poetry, philosophy, and ethics. In addition to his contributions to Sicilian studies, he pioneered the writing of local, regional, and family history. His recent works include *The Book of Twos* and *Everyday Life: How the Ordinary Became Extraordinary* and two books of poetry, *Buoyances: A Ballast Master’s Log* and *My Three Sicilies: Stories, Poems, and Histories*.

Trees, his first collection of essays, a memoir; Walking on Air in a Field of Greens; Seasonings, a first collection of poetry, and Eye Shadow, creative nonfiction. He also served two terms as Winona’s Poet Laureate.

Lee Landau has an M.L.S. in Library Science from State University of NY, Albany. At age 73, this poet writes with raw honesty about her landscape, interaction with family events, those dysfunctional backstories. She shelters emotional trauma from the snowy winters of Minnesota that spark her imagination. She writes about “Tangled Lives.” Her narrative poetry is rich in images and other sonic elements. She is widely published in magazines and journals since 2015. A prize-winning poet, she was a finalist with Poetica Magazine in 2014 and a Rash Award Finalist with the Broad River Review in 2016. She won Honorable Mention Award with New Millennium Writings in 2016, the Merit Award with the Roy B. Moore Memorial Poetry Award and the Writ in Water State Prize, both in 2015.

Saturday, June 23, 2017
Connections and Corrections: Women in the Criminal Justice System and Their Families
Presenter: Ruth Campbell
This presentation is a review of a qualitative study of eighteen women who were in a women’s residential correctional facility. Bowen family systems theory was used as the theoretical base for designing interviews of the women. Bowen family systems theory views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems theory to describe its complex interactions. Family and personal information at the time of the initial interviews was reviewed ten years later to look for similarities/differences in functioning between those with and without subsequent legal charges. The results were reported in Family Systems Forum, a publication of the center for the Study of Natural Systems and the Family in Houston, Texas.

Ruth Campbell is a retired clinical social worker with an MSW from the University of Iowa. She did postgraduate training in Bowen family systems theory and therapy with the Minnesota Institute of Family Dynamics and the Bowen Center for The Study of Family in Washington, D.C. (thebowencenter.org). She spent 32 years doing individual, couple, and family therapy in a private psychiatric practice and in the counseling department of Catholic Charities in Des Moines, Iowa. She moved to Minnesota in 2014.

The Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum will return to its regular meeting place beginning in January of 2018. We will, again, meet at the Washburn Library, 5244 Lyndale Avenue S., Minneapolis.

We begin gathering at 9:30. Meetings start at 10:00 a.m. with a brief business meeting first. Free and open to the public.
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