

Voices

And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see — or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read.

Alice Walker



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Foundation

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Creating a stronger voice
for women and girls.

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Inside Story

Artful women . . .

Whenever we have visitors in our offices here at Nokomis, they almost always comment on our art collection. From the paintings on our walls to the carpets on our floors, we are surrounded with a stunning display of art – with nearly every piece created by local women artists. The art we display in our offices looks wonderful – but it is so much more than that. Our art creates an environment that is comfortable and welcoming – a place where it feels good to work and meet. And by supporting women artists in the West Michigan area, our collection also reflects our mission.

Last winter we commissioned local painter Lisa Kowalski to help us create “something” out of a bare support pole in our reception area. Lisa created a one-of-a-kind textile totem pole for us, completely changing the feeling and focus of our entryway. Watching Lisa work – and seeing a piece of art emerge right before my eyes – inspired me to learn more about women and art. I hope you’ll enjoy reading about women and art in this issue of *Voices*.

Other news. . .

We’re pleased to welcome Katie Bode-Lang to Nokomis. Katie joins us as our Taking Flight Program Associate - our summer internship position. A recent Hope College graduate, Katie will head up our Taking Flight grants for girls program this summer. You can read more about our Taking Flight program inside. For a copy of our complete Taking Flight Request for Proposals, please call Katie at (616) 451-0267, or visit our website at www.nokomisfoundation.org.

I hope you’ll find our [loose change](#) technical assistance insert helpful. This issue includes information about board diversity, using a consultant, and other useful tips. Be sure to visit the [loose change](#) page on the Nokomis Foundation website. You’ll be able to find useful information on a variety of technical assistance topics plus great links and resources.

Kym Mulhern, President/CEO

Funding the Arts



The following highlights come from Grantmakers in the Arts (a national organization focusing on philanthropy in the arts and culture) and represent a snapshot of national foundation funding for the arts before September 11.

- Most larger foundations support arts and culture organizations
- Museums and the performing arts receive the majority of arts and culture grant dollars, and compared to grantmaking in other fields, arts and culture grants are more concentrated on capital projects and general operating support
- Grant funding for arts and culture has been increasing – not because the average grant size is increasing, but because the number of grants is increasing

Americans for the Arts, an arts advocacy organization, studied the funding outlook for arts organizations after September 11. Their findings are not so optimistic. Most arts organizations, for example, are projecting reduced revenues from all sources – including ticket sales, corporate underwriters, and state and federal government. Not all arts organizations attribute this reduction to the September 11 terrorist attacks, though. Many of them feel the economic slowdown is the biggest threat to their economic security.

Locally, Tami Ramaker, Executive Director of the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids, reports that many arts council member organizations experienced the weakest 2nd and 3rd quarters in recent history. The same organizations appear to be rebounding, however, with many reporting stronger than expected support at the end of the year. Tami also mentions that while women in the arts tend to be overlooked when it comes to funding, interest in women-focused arts programs is growing.

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Herstory

Sandra Cisneros

Sandra Cisneros (born in 1954) is an American novelist, short-story writer, essayist, and poet. She is lauded by literary scholars and critics for her works, which help bring the perspective of Chicana women into the mainstream of literary feminism.

While working on her MFA at the University of Iowa, Cisneros first realized that some of the frustrations she experienced with her writing were connected to her experiences as a Latina woman — experiences that were unique and outside the realm of dominant American culture. Cisneros began to write about conflicts directly related to her upbringing, including divided cultural loyalties, feelings of alienation, and degradation associated with poverty.

Cisneros' works include *The House on Mango Street*, *Woman Hollering Creek & Other Stories*, *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*, and *Bad Boys & Loose Women*.

Find out more about Sandra Cisneros at <http://voices.ia.umn.edu/authors/SandraCisneros.html> or www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a-f/cisneros/bio.htm.

Clementine Hunter

Clementine Hunter (1887—1988) has been called a primitive artist, a folk artist, and a naïve painter. Her bold, exuberant style defies the conventions of traditional art forms. Spending most of her life working on Louisiana's Melrose Plantation, Hunter attended school for just 10 days and never learned to read or write. She picked up her first paints in her mid-50s.

Almost all of her works were “memory paintings” showing plantation life as she remembered it: picking cotton, harvesting sugar cane, gathering figs and pecans, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other scenes of daily life. Her descriptions of her paintings became an oral history of the singular events of plantation life.

At her death, she was considered the matriarch of folk artists, but during her lifetime, Hunter was more modest about her abilities. “God puts those pictures in my head and I just puts them down on the canvas, like he wants me to,” the artist said.

Find out more about Clementine Hunter and view her paintings at www.lpb.org/education/classroom/iv/gumbo/stateofart/hunter.html, www.marciawebartobjects.com/hunter.html, or www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/020198/0201Clem.html.



Point to Ponder

“I cannot help considering it a sign of talent that I do not give up, though I can get nobody to take an interest in my efforts.”

Fanny Mendelssohn, 1836 (*sister of Felix*)

Did You Know...

Facts About Women in the Arts

Twenty years into the women's art movement, women artists are still struggling for visibility. It is well documented that they lack significant support in the art world. According to the 1990 U.S. study, *Gender Discrimination in the Artfield*:

- 50.7% of all visual artists are female
 - Women hold 53.1% of the degrees in art
- Yet . . .
- 80% of art faculty are males
 - Male artists make 68.6% of the total art income
 - Male artists receive 73% of grants/fellowships
- According to the Guerrilla Girls:
- Art museums average 15% women in curated exhibits, minority women .003%
 - 4% of museum acquisitions are of work by women artists

Facts provided by the Jean and Charles Schulz Information Center, University Library, Sonoma State University, <http://libweb.sonoma.edu/special/waa/facts.html>. The site also includes the Women Artists Archive.

The Power of Art



Art enriches our everyday lives in a variety of ways. In times of stress and uncertainty, however, art becomes even more important. Art has the power to heal, to provide hope. Art can convey anger or political messages. Art is one way of creating touchstones to the emotions that keep us human and our collective humanity alive.

Medical research has shown physiological benefits to patients exposed to the arts – blood pressure decreases, anxiety and fear are lessened, mood is elevated. More and more hospitals and medical institutions are incorporating art into their physical spaces and into their treatment plans.

Art therapy is a means for a patient to reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, and express unspoken and frequently unconscious concerns about her disease. It is particularly valuable with children who often cannot talk about their real concerns.

Art is a useful tool for people dealing with extreme stress or in times of personal transition. Several art programs and projects have been launched, for example, since September 11 to provide an outlet for those who react primarily with images, movements, or music. Other arts programs target specific groups in their healing process. A Window Between Worlds (www.awbw.org) is a non-profit organization dedicated to using art to help end domestic violence. Through creative expression, battered women and children recover a sense of renewal and power. Their images of hope, survival and strength educate the public and become “a window between worlds” for survivors taking steps to change their lives.

Here in Grand Rapids, the YWCA incorporates art into all facets of their domestic violence and sexual assault programs. The Clothesline Project, for example, not only provides creative expression and art therapy for survivors of domestic violence, but also serves as an educational piece for the general public. Art is a primary means of connecting with kids in YWCA programs. Kids at the YWCA have created a “Kids’ Wall” – a mural depicting ways to feel safe.

Art is useful in the healing process. Not only can it speed physical and emotional healing, but it can also help patients communicate with themselves – creating a “safety zone.” Through art, people can recover a sense of safety, relaxation, power, hope, and identity.

Nokomis Totem

Artist Lisa Kowalski

By Kym Mulhern

When we completed our office expansion and renovation project here at the Nokomis Foundation last fall we found we had exposed a supporting pole – right in the middle of our new reception area. We were somewhat concerned that our pole might become a hazard, so rather than camouflage it we decided, “Why not ‘do’ something with it?”

We commissioned local artist Lisa Kowalski to create a special design for our pole – something consistent with the look and feel of our new office; something that would catch people’s attention – making the pole an art piece instead of a hazard.

Lisa converted our obtrusive pole into a textile totem. Using coils of upholstery cord and a variety of hand-spun, hand-dyed yarn, Lisa wove a 10-foot “basket” around the pole. Lisa spent about three weeks working on the totem – winding and threading the yarn in intricate, colorful patterns around the pole. I think the repetition might have been tedious, but Lisa found it meditative.

It was amazing to watch the totem come to life right in our office. At first, before Lisa started weaving the totem, we all tried to avoid the pole – steering clear and pretending it wasn’t there. But as soon as the weaving began, all of us – even visitors to other nearby offices – were drawn to the pole. Now that it’s finished, it seems everyone who visits our office heads right to the totem – and they usually touch it. What once was an obtrusive and in-the-way pole is now the focal point of our entryway.

Fiction by Women

Earlier this spring, the Modern Library published its list of the top 100 20th century English-language novels. When this list came out, we were reminded of the persistence of patriarchal attitudes in literary and academic circles. The feminist journal **Feminista!** points out that the judging panel—made up of 9 men and 1 woman—selected the top 100 novels of the 20th century. The list included 92 works by men and 8 by women. (And only 2 of the 8 works by women made it into the top 50).

In response, **Feminista!** compiled their own list of **100 Great 20th Century English-language Works of Fiction by Women**. Check out their entire list online at www.feminista.com/v2n3/100.html and plan your summer reading list.



Special Thanks

All of us at the Nokomis Foundation would like to extend our special thanks to Linda LaFontsee. Linda assisted us in choosing and displaying the art throughout our offices, helping us create an environment that reflects our values and meets our mission.

Linda is co-owner of the LaFontsee Galleries and Underground Studios with her husband, Scott. They have been in business here in Grand Rapids for 15 years now, representing local artists. Linda loves her work, inspired by the many talented artists in West Michigan. Linda, herself, is one of those talented West Michigan artists. We are pleased to have three paintings by Linda in our own Nokomis collection.

Linda enjoys helping us here at Nokomis, too. She says, “I love what the Nokomis Foundation does, and I like to be a part of it.”

It was delightful having Lisa with us in the office as she created our totem. While experienced in a variety of art forms, Lisa is, first and foremost, a painter. She is represented locally by LaFontsee Galleries, and also has gallery connections in Wisconsin and Chicago—where she’s just wrapping up a show. It’s just been in the last 3-4 years, though, that Lisa stepped away from a “regular job with a regular paycheck” to devote herself to her art. Now, Lisa can say, “I’m a painter” without having to justify fitting a “hobby” into her busy schedule.

Like many other women artists, Lisa feels the pinch of balance. She must balance her role as a painter with the other roles she plays every day — including the role of Mom. She also must balance “making art” with “making money” — a significant struggle for Lisa. “Art comes from an inner place that is not related to money,” says Lisa. Sometimes doing “art for money” hinders the process.

We are pleased that Lisa shared her work with us at Nokomis. We hope you’ll stop by to see — and touch — our textile totem.



Photo by John Rothwell

News Worthy



Twink Frey, Founder of the Nokomis Foundation, was awarded the degree of Doctor of Social Science, Honoris Causa, by Aquinas College on May 11 at commencement exercises.

Katie Bode-Lang, Nokomis Intern and member of the Grant Committee graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Hope College on May 5. Katie was also named the recipient of the Academy of American Poets Prize at Hope College.

Congratulations Twink and Katie!

BraBall

www.braball.net

Check out this amazing pro-woman sculpture by artist Emily Duffy. You can donate your bra to the sculpture or purchase postcards featuring a photograph of the huge braBall. (One third of all proceeds benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.)

Odd how the creative power at once brings the whole universe to order.

—Virginia Woolf

Publication Available

Please call our office if you'd like a copy of our new report, ***We Can Do Better: Helping Prostituted Women and Girls in Grand Rapids Make Healthy Choices.*** You can also download a PDF version of the report from the Nokomis Foundation website at www.nokomisfoundation.org

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Women in Art

Since antiquity, women artists have been creating alongside their male counterparts. Many of these women were highly successful during their lifetimes, yet have been omitted from art historical documentation. For instance, before 1986, all editions of H. W. Janson's *History of Art* (the standard text used in introductory college art history courses) included 3,000 male and no female artists. In the latest version, published in 1991, only 19 women are represented. Since 1970, there has been a surge in research on women artists, resulting in the discovery of hundreds and thousands of women artists throughout history and from all over the world. (From the Jean & Charles Schulz Information Center, Sonoma State University, <http://libweb.sonoma.edu/special/waa/facts.html>)

According to the Women's Caucus for Art, women artists say what they need most is "Equal professional and academic opportunities." Why? Because discrimination is rampant in the art field. For example, in exhibitions where the juror does not know who did the work, the percentage of women artists accepted is consistently close to the percentage of women who enter the competition. On the other hand, art museums average only 15% women artists in curated exhibits and only .003% minority women artists. Gender and race override quality when gender and race are known. (From the Women's Caucus for Art, www.nationalwca.com)

Rockgrl magazine points out discrimination in the music industry with their Hall of Fame/Hall of Shame Awards. Rockgrl explains, "While many equipment manufacturers recognize women's accomplishments in the rock arena, others have been slower to warm up to the idea. Some manufacturers' ads actually serve to discourage, repel and even alienate women — who represent 52% of equipment-purchasing consumers." The Hall of Fame winning ads show women as dedicated, respected musicians practicing their art. The Hall of Shame ads show things like: a guy playing guitar while an adoring babe looks on, or a bunch of guys watching a scantily-clad all-girl band perform, with the headline, "Sometimes you pay \$12 to hear bad music. Sometimes bad music is worth \$12." (From the *Guerilla Girls*, www.guerrillagirls.com)

Web Wise



Browsing the Web with a Gender Lens

The Arts

The National Association of Women Artists www.nawanet.org

The National Museum for Women in the Arts www.nmwa.org

Art on the Net www.art.net

ArtWomen www.artwomen.org

Guerilla Girls www.guerillagirls.com

Americans for the Arts www.americansforthearts.org

Opening Closed Doors www.openingcloseddoors.org

A Window Between Worlds www.awbw.org

Music

Wow'Em <http://eausic.dartmouth.edu/~wowem>

Film, TV, and Radio

Women in Cinema: A Reference Guide www.people.virginia.edu/~pm9k/libsci/WomFilm.html

Women in the Director's Chair <http://electrapages.com/wom3435.htm>

Women Make Movies www.wmm.com

Theatre

Theatre Central www.playbill.com/cgi-bin/plb/central?cmd=start

Women's Theatre and Creativity Centre www.chebucto.ns.ca/Culture/WTCC/WTCC-Home.html

According to the Fund for Women Artists, women are one in three of prime-time television characters and one in four of children's television characters. Over the past 20 years there has been virtually no increase in the percentage of women directors (8%) or playwrights (less than 20%) on Broadway. People of color are 13% of prime-time and less than 5% of children's TV characters. (From the *Fund for Women Artists*, www.womenarts.org)

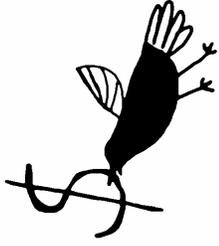
Taking Action: What can we do about the disparity?

Encourage girls to be involved in the arts. Dr. Monique Salinas-Stautfer, a music educator and conductor for over twenty years here in Grand Rapids, was increasingly concerned with the disparity in the number of women in leadership positions in the music profession. To address these concerns, she and her husband, Dan, formed the West Michigan Academy of Music for Girls to provide girls in West Michigan with the "opportunity to perform music of the highest quality, to grow more knowledgeable in music theory and practice, and to grow creatively, socially, musically, and in leadership skills."

Celebrate accomplishments of women in the arts. Linda Dykstra, Assistant Professor of Voice at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, has done extensive research of art songs by women composers. While a few women composers, e.g. Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, have received more recognition in the past decade, many other women have left bodies of work largely unknown and unrecorded. Linda is producing a professional quality CD comprised of primarily obscure, though beautiful, art songs composed by many of these previously unknown European and American women (1750 – present).

Get the facts and educate the public. The Women's Caucus for Art is launching a campaign to gather statistics on gender and race in the art world and use the statistics to help influence the decision making process. The Caucus is encouraging women artists to organize in their own communities – finding allies, formalizing their agendas, and documenting local inequities.

Support women artists. Find out more about women artists in your local community. Attend exhibits and shows. Purchase the work of women artists. Ask museums about the women artists in their collections – and challenge them to include women artists in curated exhibits.



taking flight grants for girls

Recent Grants

The Nokomis Foundation has recently awarded the following grants:

Capacity Building

Women's Resource Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$30,000 for organizational capacity building

Celebrating Women

Community Media Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$1,200 in support of the International Women's Day celebration

Hope College, Holland, Michigan, \$5,000 for production of a CD featuring songs by women composers from 1750 to the present

Wealthy Street Theatre, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$5,000 in support of the production *Inside Out*

West Michigan AIDS Memorial Quilt Display, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,000 in support of the West Michigan AIDS Memorial Quilt Display

Expanding Philanthropy

Association of Small Foundations, Bethesda, Maryland, \$5,000 in support of general operations

Women's Funding Network, San Francisco, California, \$7,500 in support of general operations

Health

Dwelling Place, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$15,000 in support of Substance Abuse Relapse Prevention for women in transitional housing and case management support services for My Sisters' House

Project Rehab, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$24,000 in support of the *Reaching Behind Bars* program

Sparta Health Center, Sparta, Michigan, \$5,000 for Spanish translated prenatal care books

The Nokomis Foundation is looking for programs that . . .

- are girl-centered, girl-developed and/or girl-directed
- challenge gender stereotypes
- create and foster non-traditional opportunities for girls
- reflect the cultural, socio-economic and ethnic diversity of West Michigan
- create positive changes in the lives of girls

Taking Flight Grant Program

In 2002, we've earmarked \$100,000 for Taking Flight grants. We expect requests to range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 with a one-year grant term. Application deadline is Monday, June 24, 2002. Funding decisions will be announced by August 26, 2002.

Who Can Apply?

Programs that directly impact the lives of girls in Kent, Ottawa or Allegan counties may apply. All applicants must be affiliated with, or sponsored by, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

How to Apply

For a copy of the complete Taking Flight Request for Proposals, please call Katie Bode-Lang at (616) 451-0267 extension 12, or visit our website at www.nokomisfoundation.org.

Proposals are due on June 24, 2002.