



**Annual Meeting at The Norman Sunshine Center
January 28, 2024 beginning at 4:00pm**

In Attendance -

Executive Committee:

President: Daphne Anderson Deeds

Vice President: Rod Pleasants

Treasurer: Joe Austin

Secretary: Barbara von Schreiber

Committee Chairs: Development: Michele James, Membership and Nominating: Judy Jackson

Trustees: Kenise Barnes, Krystyana Czeiner, Sam Funk, Jay Kaplan, Jon Riedeman, Abbey Darer Rosenwald.

Trustee Emeritus: Elizabeth MacDonald

Absent: Building Chair: Woodrow W. Campbell, Education Chair: Patty Fogle, Exhibition Chair: Pamela Szybel, Trustees at large: Paige Boller, Andrew Craven, Holly Russell.

Staff: Executive Director: Simon Holt, Exhibitions: Nanny Swoyer, Education & Membership: Alicia Boisseau

Approximately 25 members in attendance.

President's Welcome: Daphne Anderson Deeds

Daphne called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm and welcomed everyone.

“As an art historian, I have enjoyed doing a bit of research on the history of The Washington Art Association. So, I’d like to take you back to our distant past, where a trajectory that continues to evolve was initiated. I want to take you back to our distant past, where a trajectory was initiated that we continue to fulfill today. Though we have celebrated our 70th anniversary, the Association is actually 110 years old.

In 1914, the League of Washington Artists was founded by noted landscape artists H. Siddons Mowbray, William Hamilton Gibson, and Elizabeth Kempton. The League disbanded when the US entered WWI in 1917.

From 1933 to 1948, the Shepaug Railroad offered service from Grand Central to Washington Depot, leading to the arrival of internationally renowned artists in Washington, Roxbury, New Preston, and nearby towns. We all know of Alexander Calder's studio in Roxbury, but his relocation to this area was followed by modernists Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy, David Hare, Andre Masson, and Naum Gabo, as well as gallerist Julian Levy.

In 1952, the most recent incarnation of the WAA was founded by a group of artists that included Elizabeth Kempton, (who was also a founder of our earlier 1914 incarnation), William Talbot, Bill Sommerfield, Esther Peck, Hamilton Peck, and others, and was first located above the Benham Drug Store until 1954. In 1954 the Association acquired the former Post Office, and it was this location that was destroyed by the 1955 flood, along with an exhibition that included works by many of the Masters I have mentioned.

After the flood, the Association moved to our present location, which evolved as a series of buildings and additions, but with no comprehensive architectural plan. To honor our impressive legacy, and to continue the momentum initiated in 1914, we are now embarking on a major renovation of our facility, one that will allow us to provide better accommodations for students, modernized spaces for exhibitions, and expanded curricula. As our membership, classes, exhibitions, and audience have grown, so have our needs. The improved building, along with this wonderful space, will allow for the future of the Association as a fully equipped campus for making, exhibiting and understanding art of the highest caliber and a destination for artists, collectors, appreciators and the curious throughout Northwest Connecticut, Upstate New York, and beyond.

Now I would like to introduce Rod Pleasants, who needs no introduction. And I would like to add that as soon as I assumed my role, it became clear that Rod has a deep knowledge and information about the Association and the Washington area in general. He is a wonderful partner in all that I do here, and I am so grateful to work closely with him. Please welcome our esteemed Vice President."

Vice President's Report: Rod Pleasants

"I really want to bring you up to date on the Norman Sunshine Center, which, as you know, was gifted to the Washington Art Association along with all his art. There are 90 pieces downstairs, which we can sell, paying Norman a commission. We have already had lectures here and a wedding. We have a few things to work out, the acoustics, which you can probably tell, and the stairs will need to be fixed. I think we can all enjoy the space. As my partner in crime mentioned here, as we begin to remodel the existing facility, this will be a godsend, it will mean additional offices and gallery space. So, welcome everybody!"

Review Minutes of the 2023 Annual Report:

Daphne explained that due to unforeseen circumstances, the minutes of 2023 would not be read at this time.

Election of New Trustees: Judy Jackson

"I would like to welcome a new trustee, Darryl Wright. You know him from his Company, Wright Electric. He's on the board of Judy Black and is known for being a strong and dedicated member of the community. We are very lucky to have him on board. Next, I wanted to suggest to you all a Valentine's gift. If you are so inclined and know a friend who could benefit from being a member, you can gift a membership for Valentine's Day to your favorite Valentine. The gift packages will be at the Gallery."

Executive Director's Report: Simon Holt

"Again, welcome to you all to this our 2024 Annual Meeting. It is good to have an opportunity to review 2023, the Association's 71st year here in Washington and Washington Depot, and share thoughts and ideas about some exciting changes ahead.

During the year, we held many new events for our membership, including several outdoor Summer and Fall Pop-Up Art Sales for our artist members, an opportunity to participate in "Big Ink" at Five Points in June, the Cloudbreak Tour in August, a lecture by Ruth Miller here in the Norman Sunshine Center in November and several opportunities to meet other members and exhibiting artists at our bi-weekly Coffee and Conversations.

In July, we held our Summer Solstice celebration attracting over 300 people. A great time was had by all, thanks to Rod Pleasants, Bruce Glickman, Betsey Nestler, Abdo Ballester, Diane Stevens, Executive Cuisine, Big Wave, and a huge team of volunteers. There was also an opportunity to acquire some affordable works of art curated by Souby Boski and Pamela Szttybel. The Holiday Gift Sale at the end of the year focused on our membership, providing an opportunity for artist members to sell their work while at the same time supporting the Association."

Simon continued with a rundown of this year's exhibitions, highlighting the much anticipated 70th Anniversary Exhibition, celebrating 70 years of Art at the Washington Art Association. He thanked Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia for allowing us to exhibit at Spring Hill Vineyard and Souby Boski and her hard-working committee for curating such a terrific Exhibition.

This year's exhibitions:

- About Printmaking, curated by Tony Kirk, on view through February
- The Annual Members Show with prizes for Painting, Works on Paper, Photography, and Sculpture from March 9 through April 7.
- Solo Exhibition of Elizabeth MacDonald's ceramics and paintings through the end of May.

Simon mentioned how encouraged he was by the re-enrolling of students in the various classes. Revenue grew by almost \$20,000 from 2022. He thanked all the teachers for their loyal support Patty Fogle, the Education Committee Chair, and Linda West, who retired in the fall after twenty years at the Association. She will be missed.

Simon also mentioned that **Ginger Nelsen** retired from the Association at the end of last summer. She joined the Association in the spring of 1994 as a ceramics teacher. For almost 30 years, she threw herself into all aspects of the Association. In September, the Association also welcomed a new addition to the staff Alicia Boisseau. Her role revolves around the Education and Membership programs. Together with Nanny Swoyer, who focuses on Exhibitions, they are a welcome addition to the Association.

Simon next summarized **2023 grant support**. The Association received over \$100,000 in 2023 in grant support. \$65,000 came from the ARPA program (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021), to go towards upcoming building renovation. Just over \$28,000 from the State of CT from three funding initiatives. \$9,000 from the NW CT Community Foundation to help launch the first newsletter, which will be published annually. Simon stated that he feels that the Association has done well to receive this generous support from municipal, regional, and State funders. So far this year, the Association has been awarded just over \$4,000 by the State of CT's Supporting Arts Grant, and there are hopes that the Association will receive funding from the State's Arts Endowment Fund in April. Simon thanked Michele James for her invaluable oversight and help with the writing of all those grant applications. In addition, the Association received over \$20,000 from the annual Give Local fundraiser. Please make a note that this year's Give Local takes place on April 24 and 25.

Simon said we are talking with **Tess O'Dwyer**, from New York, about helping us create a fundraising plan for our building renovation program. Tess, whose website is tessodwyer.com, is a fundraising consultant and turnaround expert who has transformed countless charities in New York City and throughout the country. Simon said the Association will soon send Tess some general notes that could be considered preliminary ideas for a Case for Support. She will then get back to us with some ideas about how she might help us.

Next, Simon provided an update regarding the **new website**. Those who attended last weekend's opening of About Printmaking took the opportunity to scan the QR code that was posted around the gallery. This took attendees to waagallery.com, where one can see all the images of the About Printmaking Exhibition. Simon said, "Click on one of the images you like, and you can go ahead and buy it right from your phone. This page is just one example of how the new website will look and function. We are working with Phil Langin on launching the new website in phases to ensure that everything looks and works correctly when it goes live. It's much easier to fix problems in a phased launch than if the new website goes live all at once. I have put together an overview of our goals and aspirations for the new website, plus a timeline for you to take with you should you wish. (see attached), Thank you."

Daphne thanked Simon and mentioned how much she enjoyed working with him and his team, Nanny and Alicia.

Treasurer's Report: Joe Austin

Balances (as of 1/26/2024)

Union Savings Bank 30,832.49

Fidelity 1,395,025.01

NW CT Community Foundation 378,869.69

Total 1,804,727.19

1. Balances from the Association's accounts are shown above. Union Savings Bank is cash, the Fidelity account is invested in a money market fund. The NW CT Community Foundation is invested in an 80/20 stock/bond mix.
2. Attached is our summary income statement. Both 2022 and 2023 figures are presented in a manner that is consistent with GAAP accounting (generally accepted accounting principles), but the figures also contain several adjustments to bring them in line with GAAP, makes comparisons difficult. The GAAP presentation was adopted as part of the audit of our 2022 finances, and we will henceforth present numbers on a GAAP basis.
3. Note that art sales are now being presented on a "net" basis, wherein we only book the commission on the sale, not the entire dollar amount of the sale.
4. Our "operations" performance in 2023 was great; ~\$72k vs \$48k. Education continues to be our standout activity.
5. We continue to carry a sizable expense load, which we fund with non-operating items such as member dues, contributions, grants, and other income over time. We did a great job closing the gap in 2023.
6. Approximately half the other income for 2023 (\$65k) was interest from our account at Fidelity; the other half was investment gains and an adjustment per the GAAP accounting. The current yield on the Fidelity account is 5.22%.
7. We are well positioned near-term to fund the ongoing activities of the Association, including the capital campaign. However longer term, the Association needs to find ways to generate more operating income.
8. I would like to thank Simon and Carol Kallstrom, our bookkeeper, for keeping good track of our finances. I would also like to thank Peter Kaufman, the accountant who prepared our Form 990 and helped us organize the GAAP accounting.

Income	2023	2022
Art Sales	53,333	20,190
Education	122,894	102,989
Events	73,695	89,901
Total	249,922	213,080
Expenses		
Exhibitions	21,445	18,006
Education	87,231	79,730
Events	69,080	67,345
Total	177,757	165,081
Net from Operations	72,165	48,000
Overhead		
Salaries & Wages	154,719	163,973
Payroll Taxes	12,957	14,154
Repairs & Maintenance	24,064	27,005
Professional Services	25,036	25,114
Sunshine Center	15,222	0
Insurance	14,927	11,988
Bank Charges	11,255	9,144
Grants Expense	10,175	0
Utilities	9,963	19,223
Computer	9,779	5,746
Capital Campaign	7,500	0
Postage & Printing	6,117	3,090
Office supplies	3,566	5,199
Dues & Memberships	3,295	4,002
Administrative	2,244	7,495
Advertising	744	5,777
Retirement Benefits	0	39,000
Depreciation	0	11,768
Total Overhead	311,563	352,678
Operating Deficit	(239,397)	(304,679)
Member Dues	33,525	46,235
Contributions	54,567	988,625
Grants	103,355	21,200
Adjustment Items		14,000
Other Income	120,382	(34,913)
Total Non-Operating	311,829	1,035,147
Net Income/ Cash Basis	72,432	730,469

President's acknowledgement of retiring Trustees

Anne Marie Foran and Diane Stevens

Daphne relayed that neither Anne Marie, co-chair of the membership committee who was undergoing surgery, nor Diane Stevens were able to attend. She went on to say that they have both been marvelous contributors to our cause. Diane oversaw a program of volunteers for eight years, single-handedly, and even devised her own website. She made sure that all our events were well covered and were she here, Daphne said she would be praising her to the hilt.

Daphne then asked Judy to say a few words about Anne Marie. Judy responded, "She is very creative, full of good ideas, and great at energizing the members." Daphne went on to say that she has gifts for them both, which they will get at a later date.

Karen Simmons and Jamie Felner, both members of the audience, had many questions and concerns. Primarily regarding meetings for members, which they felt should be far more frequent, participatory, and informative. They wanted the website to be a creative tool for imparting information on a regular basis. They did not understand why the members were not part of this conversation if large building plans were in the works. Daphne responded that things have not been decided yet. The building committee has not had a meeting since the fall, and Woody Campbell, Chair of the Building Committee, could not be here tonight, or he might have made some remarks. Daphne said that when the Building Committee is ready and has approvals from the town, they will call a member's forum, discuss the plans, hear the concerns, and agree on future steps.

Daphne went on to say that much of what she was hearing today reflects back to the fact that from being a small, locally driven organization, we are evolving into something larger and more dynamic. To which Karen replied that as an association, members feel we need to be brought into that. They like being a member association of artists and don't want to be a New York Gallery. Karen stated that she understands that the Executive Committee wants what's best, but the members have not made themselves heard, and that's why these meetings are important.

Jamie also had some financial questions, which Joe answered. Karen suggested sending the financial information a week before giving members a chance to digest the information and form questions.

Marc Chabot, who's been part of the Washington Art Association for 35 years, asked that we address the studio's electric outputs and reinstate "Potluck suppers". He also asked that we not make our events too expensive. He then mentioned that he had heard that artists were not allowed to know who bought their art. There was an uproar about this, a lot of voices said they had heard this too, but Daphne answered emphatically that this was absolutely not true.

Daphne went on to say that if we are done with this portion of the meeting, she would like to introduce Alan.

“Alan Organschi is a principal and partner of Gray Organschi Architecture, with his wife Lisa, who has offices in New Haven. Alan is internationally known for his green, sustainable, and ecological architecture. In 2012 Lisa Gray was honored by the American Academy Arts & Lectures award for architecture, and both Alan and Lisa were awarded The AIA New England Design award for the Fairfield Jesuit Center.”

Alan’s address was accompanied by his PowerPoint presentation. Daphne suggested members ask questions of Alan directly at the end of the presentation.

President’s Thank you.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara von Schreiber