



FOCUS

SPRING 2025



A Message from the KAL President

Jim Rojas

It's hard to believe it is February 2025. This time is when I—and maybe many of you see how we did on our New Year resolutions. In 2024, I resolved to enjoy Winter more. I want that one back. This year I resolved to live a life with more art in it, no matter what the weather or time of year. I feel I might keep this one because Art League and the KIA offer a lot to support this resolution. KIA continues to celebrate its 100-year anniversary with events and exhibitions and member activities that you will want to put on the family calendar that you resolved to use this year.

And now that it is 2025, the Art League begins celebrating our 70 years of bringing interesting presentations and discussions about art and trips to interesting art destinations. Through programming and materials, we will be sharing with you both a looking back on our history and a looking forward to new great conversations about art.

Up first is the return of Richard Phillips: “Strokes of Freedom” on February 25 at 10 am in the KIA Auditorium. A reception will precede the talk.

Richard will talk about how art saved him while wrongly incarcerated for 46 years. Richard is a dynamic and heartwarming person and speaker. The presentation is free to all. The reception for this event will be the first of our “Food is Art Receptions” associated with our speaker presentations. The reception is sponsored by Greenleaf Hospitality and features Kalamazoo Country Club Chef RJ Bisnett. Chef Bisnett is creating food to reflect the art and art history of Richard Phillips. There will be more information coming out on our food as art initiative, so stay tuned and come check it out our first reception.

Next up is a presentation March 12 by Dr. Abbas Daneshvari, a renowned art historian and scholar, whose presentation will be about Postmodernism Across Western and Eastern Arts. This is for all of us who are interested in a deeper understanding of art and the journey art takes. This will also be at 10:00 am in the KIA Auditorium.

Also mark your calendars for April 9 at 10 am. Local woodblock printmaker extraordinaire Mary Brodbeck will talk about her history, evolution from corporate work and her influences. Mary is a local treasure and known nationally and internationally for her exquisite prints.

If you have not already done so, check out our website links to recordings of our last two presentations. The presentations by Patrick Bringley and Dr. Brian Stewart are now available for your viewing pleasure. The recordings are a great way to see presentations you had to miss and to refresh details if you were there.

It has been a cold winter. I hope this finds you warm and safe and passionate about art.



2025 Lecture Series

Join us for a continuation of our exciting speaker lineup

Tuesday, February 25

Richard Phillips Strokes of Freedom

10 am reception | 10:30 program in KIA Auditorium

Please join us and invite a friend to hear Richard Phillips’ compelling story on this special day and time. This rescheduled presentation is free and open to the public.



A special **Food is Art Reception** before the program featuring food by Kalamazoo County Club Chef RJ Bisnett is sponsored by Greenleaf Hospitality.

Detroit artist Richard Phillips started painting while in prison with a mail order watercolor set: landscapes, portraits of famous people, jazz musicians, and more, eventually creating over 400 paintings.

Arrested in 1971 for a murder he didn’t commit, Phillips was in prison for 46 years. Creating art enabled him to persist and deal with the injustice

of his situation. “I didn’t actually think I’d ever be free again. This art is what I did to stay sane,” Phillips said. “I could get off into one of my paintings and just be in there for hours.” Today, collectors and viewers alike appreciate the beauty he created throughout those long decades.

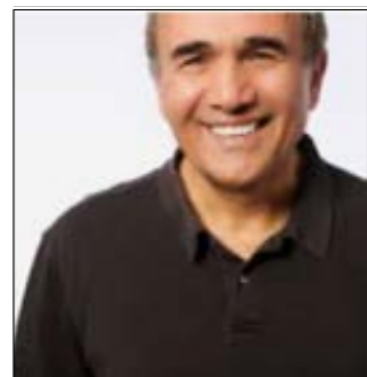
March 12, 2025

Dr. Abbas Daneshvari, Art Historian & Scholar: Postmodernism Across Western and Eastern Arts: Of Language and Truth

10:00 am | KIA Auditorium
Reception following Lecture

Explore the cultural transformations anticipated and reflected in the arts of Europe and the United States from the Surrealists to the Postmodernists.

Professor Abbas Daneshvari is the former Chair of the Department of Art and Professor of Art History at California State University, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Amazingly Original: Contemporary Iranian Art at Crossroads* as well as numerous publications on various aspects of Islamic art’s iconography.

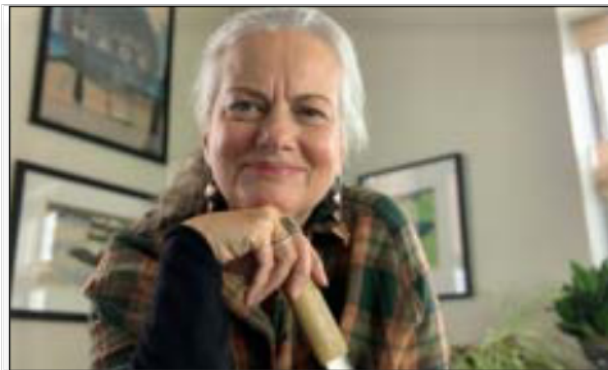


April 9, 2025

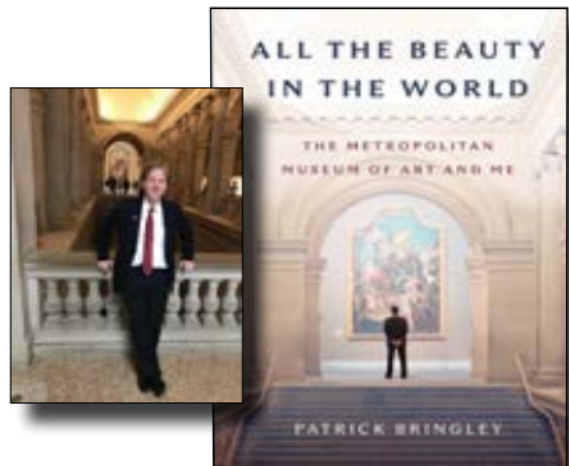
***Mary Brodbeck Woodblock Printmaker:
Influences and Evolution***

10:00 am | KIA Auditorium
Reception following Lecture

Mary Brodbeck worked as an Industrial Designer in the West Michigan furniture industry for a dozen years – many of her designs hold US patents – before shifting to image-making in the 1990s. In her Art League presentation, Mary will reveal why she left the corporate environment to pursue an art career, who and what influenced her along the way, how she evolved into specializing in Japanese printmaking techniques, and where she is now.



Mary's nature-inspired woodblock prints, often depicting the Great Lakes watershed region, are found in collections at institutions such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, and the Muskegon Museum of Art. She produced an award-winning documentary (*Becoming Made, 2014*), received over a dozen national awards for her woodblock prints, and has conducted more than 40 workshops nationally and internationally. Currently, she and her mentor have a traveling exhibition in the KRESA program, which serves public schools throughout Kalamazoo County. Mary's work is represented at Watanabe Color Prints in Tokyo, the oldest print gallery in Japan.



In October, Art League was excited to host best-selling author Patrick Bringley. Since then, Bringley created a monologue play based on his book "*All the Beauty in the World*" which he performed at a premiere in November at the Charleston Literary Festival.

Bringley's book offered a window into the world of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's guards. Watch "*Magical Encounters: Security Guard's Art Included in Major Met Exhibition*" on the Met's YouTube channel (click on link below) and learn how a chance encounter and a friendly chat in the Met's galleries led to the inclusion a security guard's art in a major Met exhibition.

youtu.be/EL4PpjQX8k4?si=S456PqEs5Yg248mY

A Message from the KIA Executive Director

Michelle Hargrave

Dear Art League Members,

We sincerely appreciate your tremendous support and dedication to the arts and the vibrant community of Kalamazoo! The Art League has long played a vital role in enriching the KIA, and we are deeply grateful for your passion and commitment. Your



engagement allows the KIA to continue bringing transformative exhibitions, inspiring programs, and meaningful experiences to our community. This year, we invite you to experience a diverse range of exhibitions, including *Sourced from the 'Zoo* (March 8–May 25), which celebrates the artwork and stories of our community. Mark your calendar for the Members' Preview of *Sourced from the 'Zoo* on March 6! We also look forward to highlighting the creativity of local emerging artists in the Young Artists of Kalamazoo County (March 15 - April 14) and High School Area Show (April 26-May25).

We are especially excited to present *An Infinite Constellation of Love* in the Joy Light Gallery of Asian Art (February 22–June 15). This immersive exhibition showcases the interdisciplinary world of JooYoung Choi. Don't miss the Joy Light Lecture on March 20, where Choi will share insights into her remarkable artistic journey. And mark your calendars for our *Centennial REMIX Celebration* on April 11! This special event invites you to celebrate KIA's 100 years of connecting people and art with an evening

of prohibition-era cocktails, music spanning the century, intimate gallery tours, and interactive art moments presented by the Kirk Newman Art School. Tickets are available for \$100. A special thank you to our incredible host committee, including Art League Board member Diane Eberts! There's so much to look forward to this spring at the KIA! You can find out all the ways to connect at <https://kiarts.org/events/>.

Your membership in the Art League and the KIA makes an incredible difference. Your generosity and enthusiasm help bring these programs to life, ensuring that art remains accessible, engaging, and relevant for all. Thank you for your unwavering support and for being an essential part of the KIA's journey.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Warmly,
Michelle Hargrave
Executive Director

Did You Know?

Recordings of many Art League lectures are available online.

Visit KalamazooArtLeague.org/programs for links to fall 2024 programs as well earlier seasons.

depARTures

Coming Attractions



Stay tuned to learn the details about coming depARTure trips to enjoy the best of the mid-west's architectural and artistic heritage in the spring and fall.

With the coming of warmer weather we are planning to tour a number of Detroit's National Register of Historic Places Beaux Arts and Art Deco buildings, and enjoy lunch at a celebrated bistro set among emerging art galleries whose exhibits we can visit before heading home.

And as fall begins our depARTture will visit the Windy City where we plan to visit internationally recognized Asian and ethnographic art galleries, and auction showrooms. Then, following a memorable dinner at one of the city's finest Italian restaurants, we will board our Twilight Architectural River Cruise.

Reduced Price Membership

For only \$30, you may join the Kalamazoo Art League for the remainder of this program year (ends June 30)! You will get free attendance to the remaining programs as well as an invitation to the Annual Membership Brunch.

You must be a current member of the KIA to join. Membership forms will be available at a check-in table for the February and March lectures.

Just complete the form at the end of this newsletter and return to the address noted at the bottom.

Our Philosophy

We demonstrate appreciation for our special relationship with the KIA by providing support for their mission and enhance its reputation as well as our own.

We actively seek to create an environment that is welcoming and comfortable to all individuals seeking enrichment through study and appreciation of the visual arts and we strive to include participation from diverse segments of our Southwest Michigan community.

We laugh and remember to enjoy our work and be thankful for the outstanding art that surrounds us.

Membership Benefits

- Free admission to Art League's dynamic lecture series, showcasing outstanding artists, curators, and other scholars from all over North America.
- Invitations to members-only events.
- Advance notice and discounts for depARTures travel opportunities.
- Fun and friendly networking and socializing with members, artists, experts, and an enthusiastic community that appreciates and supports the visual arts.
- Art League's quarterly FOCUS E-newsletter and email updates on Art League news and events.