

artist profile Maj-Britt Hilstrom

A Multi-Disciplinary Artist

Interview by Marc Ellen Hamel



I don't have a "favorite" medium. When I get an idea, I like to run with it and use whatever medium suits my idea. Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo excelled at drawing, painting, and sculpture; they couldn't limit themselves. Well, neither can I!

Maj-Britt Hilstrom was one of the first four members of Nordic 5 Arts. She met Kati Casida through a mutual friend and a strong connection developed because of their Scandinavian background. Kati invited her, together with Pat Bengtson Jones and Dorothy McCall, to lunch in the early 90s and it became the founding event of Nordic 5 Arts.

Maj-Britt grew up in Chicago to parents who had emigrated from Jamtland, Sweden. They came to the United States and met in Minneapolis while in night school learning English. Maj-Britt's artistic ability and training began early and she remembers telling inquiring visitors at the age of five that she was going to be an artist. The Art Institute of Chicago gave a weekly series of art lectures for selected junior high school students from public schools and she was chosen to attend, traveling by bus and elevated train one hour each way to the classes. She later attended Augustana College, a liberal arts college, majoring in Sociology, with minors in Fine Art and Music. To be able to afford oil paint and brushes, she worked her way through college by waitressing and clerical work.

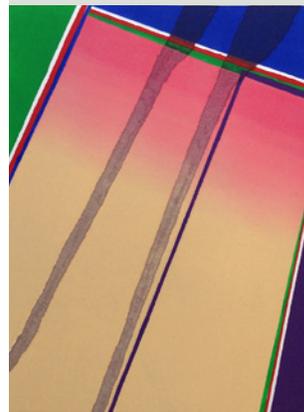
Maj-Britt works in many media: painting (watercolor and oil), sculpture, printmaking, and bookmaking. She started oil painting in college and later learned printmaking at San Francisco City College and in Japan. She also traveled to Italy to study marble carving and states that *"Books have helped guide me and you don't know what you can do unless you try it."* Working in different media, she has two studios in her home: an indoor studio for printmaking, painting, and bookmaking, and an outside studio for marble carving.

Water is an important subject in Maj-Britt's work: *"Much of my artwork concerns the problem of over-fishing. Many species are now close to extinction. Purity of water is part of this issue. There is NO NEW WATER. What we are drinking is millions of years old and we should take care of it."*

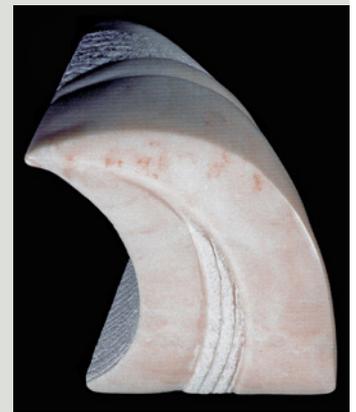
Maj-Britt is a versatile and successful artist who founded The Blue Bay Press in 1982. She shares some words of wisdom: *"It is important to keep on working on our art. We must accept that galleries generally are in the business of making money, not of encouraging artists in their creative abilities. If you have a passion to do art, you may or may not be rewarded for doing so. It will generally have nothing to do with the validity or lack of validity of your art."*



Sycamore Tree in France, watercolor. Private collection.



Poem Series, monotype, Chine collé.



Tsunami, marble. Private collection.



Waterscape, woodblock on leather mounted on wood.
Collection of Kaiser Hospital, Oakland.

Marc Ellen Hamel will have an exhibit of her colorful, nature-related oil paintings, "Recollections in Nature," at Montclair Gallery, 1986 Mountain Blvd., Oakland in June-July, 2018. The reception will be on Thursday June 7, 7-9 PM. She recently completed an intensive 3-day workshop at the Kala Institute in Berkeley, where she learned to make etchings in a representational style. She is re-organizing her studio at Hunters Point Shipyard, which she has had since 1993, to make room for sharing her space with a studio mate. This has provided the opportunity to go through her many years of artwork and create an inventory so she can plan the ultimate future of her "artist estate" - an issue on many of our minds these days. She recommends "Start Young and Keep Good Records!"

Kristin Lindseth reported that she was invited to exhibit her sculpture in two exhibits: "Showing Up With Care," Euphrat Museum, De Anza College, Cupertino, February 1 to March 22; and "The Artist's Studio with Kristin Lindseth and George Rivera," New Museum of Los Gatos, February through June. Her sculpture and printmaking artworks have been acquired by the following museums for their permanent collections: Morris Graves Museum of Art, Eureka, CA; Triton Museum of Art, Santa Clara, CA; New Museum of Los Gatos, CA; San Luis Obispo Museum of Art. Her work has also been acquired by the Fayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Two Nordic 5 Artists, **Diane Rusnak** and **Barbara Stevens Strauss**, showed their work in a two-artist exhibit at the Orinda Art Gallery during the month of January. **Diane** showed paintings of mysterious dreams, a series called "Art from Night Dreams." Also on display were works in bark (seen here), acrylic paintings, and some of her art books exploring dream subjects. The curator stated: "Diane's artwork allows you to peek into her dream world." **Barbara** showed a variety of her ceramic work, including raku-fired, pit-fired, and high-fired ceramic art objects with oxides (shown here).

Helene Sobol recently visited Cuba and her photograph "Bus Stop, Havana" (shown here) was exhibited in February at SF Women Artists Gallery. She states: "It captures a moment that expresses both the past and present in today's Cuba: a bus stop in a state of disrepair, typical of the beautiful architecture throughout the city, which is decaying for lack of upkeep and maintenance. In contrast, the classic cars of the 50s are being beautifully maintained and provide a colorful and vibrant quality to Havana as they buzz around providing rides to tourists."

Helena Tiainen participated in "The Us Show" at the Blue Line Arts Gallery in Roseville, California, December 1, 2017 - January 13, 2018. The exhibit showed work of foreign-born artists currently residing in the US.

Jenny Wantuch was one of two invited artists in a show of landscape paintings at the Grey City Gallery, 250 Columbus St., in the North Beach area of San Francisco, March 2 and 3. She reports that her painting "Lands End (San Francisco)," (shown here), was sold above the "Buy-it-now" price at the annual ArtSpan Benefit Auction held on March 24.

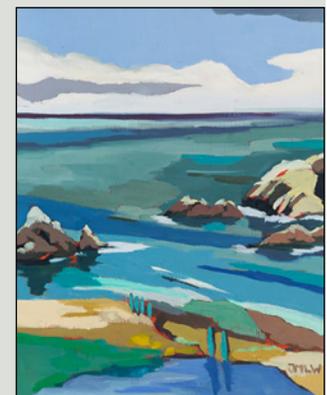
Lee Williams found inspiration for her experimental artwork with recycled papers during her travel to Norway and the Orkneys last year. "Fjord View," seen here, is from that experimental series. Earlier this year, she participated in an intense and rewarding "30 Paintings in 30 Days" challenge.



Kristin Lindseth



Lee Williams



Jenny Wantuch



Helene Sobol



Diane Rusnak



Barbara Stevens Strauss

Nordic Voyage: A Sense of Place Reception March 1, 2018



*Nordic Voyage:
A Sense of Place
March 2 - April 7*



Diane Rusnak "I Dreamt a Mythology for Dad and Dottie"

"My sister Dottie, who lived in Concord, CA, has been a Missing Person for 33 years and is presumed dead. In this painting, I am honoring both her and my father. In the center of the painting, I stand in front of a Saami dwelling with a couple wearing ritual costumes. After a shamanic ritual, I am told: "There has been a murder" and my sister and her dog are taken on a sleigh into the heavens amongst the stars and the aurora borealis of the Northern sky. My electrician father is depicted on the left from an earlier dream and on the right is a Saami Mother Earth symbol."



Photos, clockwise from upper left: Ulla de Larios; View of Harrington Gallery; Barbara Stevens Strauss; Marc Ellen Hamel and Debra Jewell; Sculpture by Kati Casida and Painting by Marc Ellen Hamel; Maj-Britt Mobrand; 3 artists, left to right: Pam Fingado, Helene Sobol and Lee Williams.

to see artist pages and the "Runes Revealed" catalog visit nordic5arts.com
thank you to everyone who contributed copy and photos to this issue of the newsbrief!

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