

Milton Artists' Guild Monthly Meeting

September 15, 2016, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Milton Town Offices Community Room

Attendance:

Gisela Alpert, Doris Bergeron, Ann Bissonnette, Bill Boccio, Greg Drew, Claudette Eaton, Mary Ann Godin, Annette Hansen, Dave Lesperance, Tina Lesperance, Lori MacLaughlin, Lorraine Manley, Jane Morgan, Michael Purcell, Linda Stech, Nicole Vance, Trine Wilson, Jim Yolda, visitors Elizabeth Drew and Mike Thompson

Agenda

Library Basket Donations

Lorraine will be putting together the MAG Basket for the library fundraiser. Please give all donations for the basket to her. Items can be: a nice art book, various art supplies, plus artists' items such as cards, jewelry, prints, photographs, anything fairly small. Artists can also make their own personal baskets to donate. The baskets should include one book and other small items/prints of the artist's choice. Deadline for donations is the next MAG meeting on October 20th. Please contact Lorraine at 893-7860 if anyone has something to offer but can't make the meeting.

August Meet and Greet Recap / Come As You Art

The MAG's second Meet and Greet had 31 attendees, mostly MAG members and not many people from the community.

Trine said August was a hard time frame. Mary Ann thought, and others agreed, that having the Meet and Greet at the same time as a town activity that was taking place at the library or nearby might draw more people in. Suggestions included tying the Meet and Greet to the Activities Fair or the Community Dinners.

It was asked what were the goals of the Meet and Greet? Could they be made more clear. Doris said the goals were to see each other's art and have the community in to attract other people into the group. Discussion ensued and the consensus was that our upcoming event might be the same reach as our August event. It was decided to see how the Come As You Art (CAYA) event works. If CAYA goes well, it might take the place of the Meet and Greet.

Advertising for CAYA was discussed. Mary Ann said there would be an ad for it on Fox 44. The Milton Independent did an article on it, which was great publicity. The Independent was willing to do the article because the original plan for CAYA was to demonstrate, rather than sell, art. The paper won't do articles on events where the sole purpose is selling. However, some members felt that the event would be a waste of time for them if they couldn't sell their work, so the plan of the event was changed to allow members to sell their work.

Annette suggested that members could write articles about the event and submit them to smaller newspapers. Gisela said a letter to the editor could be written. Bill suggested radio ads and event

flyers. Gisela said flyers were given out at the Activities Fair. More copies of the flyers can be made and distributed.

CAYA was posted on Facebook and boosted twice to reach more people.

Tina suggested asking CAYA visitors how they heard about the event to track which forms of advertising were most effective. Nicole said the person manning the MAG booth at the event could ask about that.

Courtney Lamdin won't be available to take photos at the event. Bill will take photos. He said he would ask his son, who takes photos for the Burlington Free Press, if he could come and take some photos. It was suggested that the photos be posted to social media for advertising.

Path Forward

The MAG became a 501c3 nonprofit organization in 2010. Gisela put forth the question to the membership: Do we stay the way we are or do we move forward? In the past, members have been in favor of having an art center. To find out what members want — what their visions for the future of the MAG are — the Board will be sending out two questionnaires. One will be about creating an art center and the other will be about an art infusion for Milton, involving murals and outdoor sculptures, as a primer for an art center.

Building an art center will mean a lot of hard work, and it could cost millions of dollars. Right now, the MAG has 0 dollars dedicated toward this mission. No decisions are being made now, and there will be numerous discussions about it going into the next year.

Separate Meetings for Business and Art?

Gisela said she had heard from some members that they would like the monthly meetings to spend more time on art-related topics and less on business topics.

When the MAG started in 1988, members got together to discuss art. In 2010, the MAG became a nonprofit, which required the organization to put more focus on the business side because there was more business that had to be done. Since 2010, the MAG has grown tremendously in both membership and in the many more organized activities offered. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fit art discussions and the necessary business discussions in the two-hour meeting format.

Gisela asked what the members wanted. If the MAG had two separate meetings, one for art and one for business, the members who wanted to talk about art could go to the art meeting, and those who wanted to know about the business side could go to the business meeting.

Trine asked if the monthly meetings could be longer. For the day meetings, she suggested an hour and a half for the business part, then having 45 minutes to an hour for a brown bag or potluck lunch for socializing/art discussion afterward. "Meet and eat." In the evenings, she suggested starting with the socializing and art discussion at 5:30 with possibly a potluck and then moving to the business discussion around 6:15 or 6:30.

Dave said he preferred split meetings as we've been doing, not separate meetings. He felt that if the goals were clearly defined, the Board officers responsible for doing the business should be trusted to do the business.

Gisela said that, yes, the MAG has yearly elections to choose leaders for the organization, and the leaders should lead, but that the major decisions will always be brought to the membership for a vote.

Mary Ann said the MAG was at a crossroads and needed to get a commitment from the membership. The members must commit to help out and must expect to have to deal with the business side of the organization. She prefers the split meeting and suggested that maybe those who were only interested in the art discussion could get together and have their own meetings about art.

Greg said when groups grow into something larger, people don't want to do the business part, but he wants to know about the business. He likes the dual meetings and feels the business part is needed to keep people up to speed with what's going on with the organization.

Linda said we absolutely have to discuss business, and she agrees with Mary Ann.

Gisela was asked about the art center idea and if it was something the members really wanted because past discussions of it weren't remembered. Gisela said there had been numerous discussions in the past where most people were in favor of an art center, but no decisions were ever made, and there was no formal vote. The art center will need much more discussion, a lot of work, and volunteers. She said she would look back through past minutes and find where the art center was discussed.

A question was asked if committee chairs attended Board meetings. Gisela said sometimes the Publicity Committee did attend. For transparency, Gisela said the Board was considering sending the Board meeting minutes to the membership, not for criticism or discussion but to keep the membership informed. Annette suggested the committee chairs attend the Board meetings to give reports.

Gisela said her position as President involves an overwhelming amount of work and that it is a full time job.

Dave asked Gisela, as President, what do you need from the membership to make your job easier?

Gisela said she would like less anger and negativity when members disagree with something. She would ask that they send creative feedback and possible solutions, rather than just complaining, and above all, be kind. She said it would be helpful if members could volunteer as much as possible. Everyone chipping in a little bit makes things easier.

Mary Ann asked if the membership decided not to go forward with the art center, what would we do?

Gisela said she wanted to make the organization strong and give it good roots so that when she stepped down as president, the MAG would continue to grow and be strong and not fall by the wayside as other artists' organizations have.

Doris asked what was the best way to ask for members' opinions.

Gisela said that Amy Cook had suggested having a portal on the MAG website where members could log in and leave comments.

Greg suggested using Survey Monkey. He said it was quick and easy and left room for comments.

Gisela revisited the idea of expanding the meetings from two hours and adding half an hour to fit in both business and art.

Ann said if there was that much business, time limits should be set for each topic.

Gisela said she had tried that with today's agenda, but it was hard to keep to the limits because sometimes the spirited discussions lasted longer than the allotted time.

Annette asked if the agenda could be sent out to the membership earlier. As it is now, Doris sends a meeting reminder out on the Monday before the meeting, and then Gisela sends out the agenda the day before the meeting. If the agenda could be sent out earlier, members would have more time to think about the topics. It was agreed that the process would be reversed.

Before handing the meeting over to Nicole and her brief update on CAYA, Gisela stated that the two major current topics of the 'path forward' would be on the next October meeting agenda.

Come As You Art Reminders For Saturday, 9/17

Set up will be around 8:30. Artists should arrive around 9:00 to set up their booths/displays. Don't forget to bring baked goods for the bake sale — finger foods, nothing that needs refrigeration. There will be a donation jar on the bake sale table. Lorraine will bring more signs.

Jane Morgan — Special presentation: Artists' Critique - a Positive Approach

Based on teachings at MOMA

Developed by Sally Warren, Grafton, VT about 26 years ago

Focus: Learn the difference between constructive critique and negative criticism. This well-proven method provides a safe, informative and stimulating environment in which to discuss artists' work. It is a great way to grow as an artist as you will gain knowledge of your own work and intentions as well as that of fellow artists.

Benefit: This method provides a sure-fire format for critiquing any art and can easily be applied to your solo critiques while working in your own studio. You will have a " language" and a focus which will aid you in art appreciation wherever you go. Especially on our MAG trips!

Jane gave a presentation on positive critiquing versus negative criticism of artwork. This approach is based on respect and lays a foundation of trust, which is necessary for a successful critiquing session. The critique should empower the artist and allow the artist to look at their work in a new light based what is said during the critique. The idea is to listen, not criticize, and not be judgmental.

Jane said the biggest problem with communication is that we don't listen to understand. We listen to reply, and artists listen to defend and explain.

In the end, those doing the critique must respect the artist to make the final decision on his/her work.

The critique session should begin with stating the positives. Those doing the critiques take turns making "I see..." statements. The statements should not mention specific objects in the artwork but should be about shapes, colors, lines, composition, and things of that nature. For example, with a still life painting, the critiquer wouldn't say, "I see an apple in the lower right corner of the painting." They would say, "I see something round in the lower right corner of the painting." The statement would be made in a neutral tone of voice, and there would be no discussion.

After each statement, the artist would look at their work and talk about their thinking and about what they thought about what was said and how it relates to the painting. The artist would evaluate their own artwork out loud based on the statements. During the process, the artist must think about their own voice and vision and not about how other people see their work.

Doris Bergeron, Ann Bissonnette, and Linda Stech participated as critiquers in the presentation and read prepared "I see..." statements.

Afterward, the artist asks the critique group for help with any areas the artist might be having difficulty with. The artist can take notes, but no interruptions are allowed to ask for repetition.

This critiquing process can work for artists at any level. The artist can learn so much, because it allows the artist to separate themselves from the emotional aspect of the art and look at their work objectively.

Thank you, Jane!

Show & Tell

Doris Bergeron — brought in two lovely monotypes.

Claudia Eaton — brought in a stunning acrylic painting of a wolf.

Nicole Vance — showed colorful felted art designs, including a peacock and lavender flowers.

Lorraine Manley — showed a monochromatic acrylic painting of birch trees using three colors of black, white, and yellow ochre.

Linda Stech — showed a framed photograph of a wintry scene with her son skiing in forested mountains.

Trine Wilson — brought in some beautiful note cards featuring water droplets on leaves.

Bill Boccio — showed three pieces of photography: the Vermont statehouse, lovely water lilies and lady slippers.

Jim Yolda — brought in a German book on the history of the Cold War era that included one of his photos — an army photo he had taken in Germany in 1980. The authors had chosen the photo from his website.

Respectfully submitted by Lori MacLaughlin, Secretary