

transmutation • avatar • conversion • transition • discord • regeneration

CHICAGO  
**WCA**  
WOMEN'S CAUCUS for ART

# TransMutation

# CHICAGO CWCA WOMEN'S CAUCUS for ART TRANSMOGRIFICATION

Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires.

— Pablo Picasso



TRANSMOGRIFICATION is a themed exhibition for and curated by current CWCA members. All artists addressed the theme, TRANSMOGRIFICATION, in their exhibited art.

TRANSMOGRIFICATION is as simple as transitioning from who we are by entering a cardboard box “the transmogrifier,” as seen in the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon.

Or it can be as complicated as altering ourselves, art, institutions, and beliefs into the fantastic, magical, or bizarre, as seen in the metamorphosis from a chrysalis into a butterfly, or in game arts.

It is the artist's interpretation that makes it personal and their own, in the artwork's dramatic change of shape and form, emotion and mood, and/or appearance. The artist's medium, in most cases, has already transmogrified: The line becomes energy. The circle becomes a sphere. The portrait becomes self.

*This Chicago Women's Caucus for Art (CWCA) TRANSMOGRIFICATION catalog was produced by CWCA; designed by bert leveille; edited and proofed by Jeane McGrail, Eldon Schulz, bert leveille, and Arlene Rakoncaj*

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# TRANSMOGRIFICATION artists

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## ELEANOR SPIESS-FERRIS

To most children, the word transmogrification is not part of their vocabulary. It is, however, part of their world – from the fact that their own bodies change, to the realization that the world around them is full of change (as winter turns to spring.)

This twenty-dollar word, transmogrification, has been part of my art practice since the beginning. As a child I escaped to a wild unattended orchard of mostly green apple (sour) trees and plum (sweet) trees - playing, observing, becoming part of the wild nature that was just over the irrigation bridge from my home in Northern New Mexico.

A child who plays alone makes a playmate of the world around them. Orchard, so wild and so mysterious, was friend. She revealed her secrets and claimed this child's soul. She entered into discussions about death, dreams, and childhood concerns using her own being as example and metaphor. Once I thought that it was I who formed and found the questions and the answers to my childhood thoughts there in that wild place, but I now see that it was Orchard who drew me into herself and who absorbed me. I still am caught in her being. I continue to put image to her story. It was I that was transformed into her likeness – I became a purveyor of the bizarre and the grotesque as I continue to tell the Orchard's narrative.

*"Early Frost", gouache, 22" x 22"*

Essay on Eleanor Spiess-Ferris' 2017 retrospective

The Lady Is Not For Burning

The lady is not for burning. It is a title, an assertion, and a caution. Does she not burn because she is magical, protected by spell work from fire? Or is she just too damned resilient and experienced not to fall for the pretty fictions and lies of her adversaries? Both, for she has endured in Eleanor Spiess Ferris's paintings for over 40 years, central to the narrative but rarely ever named.

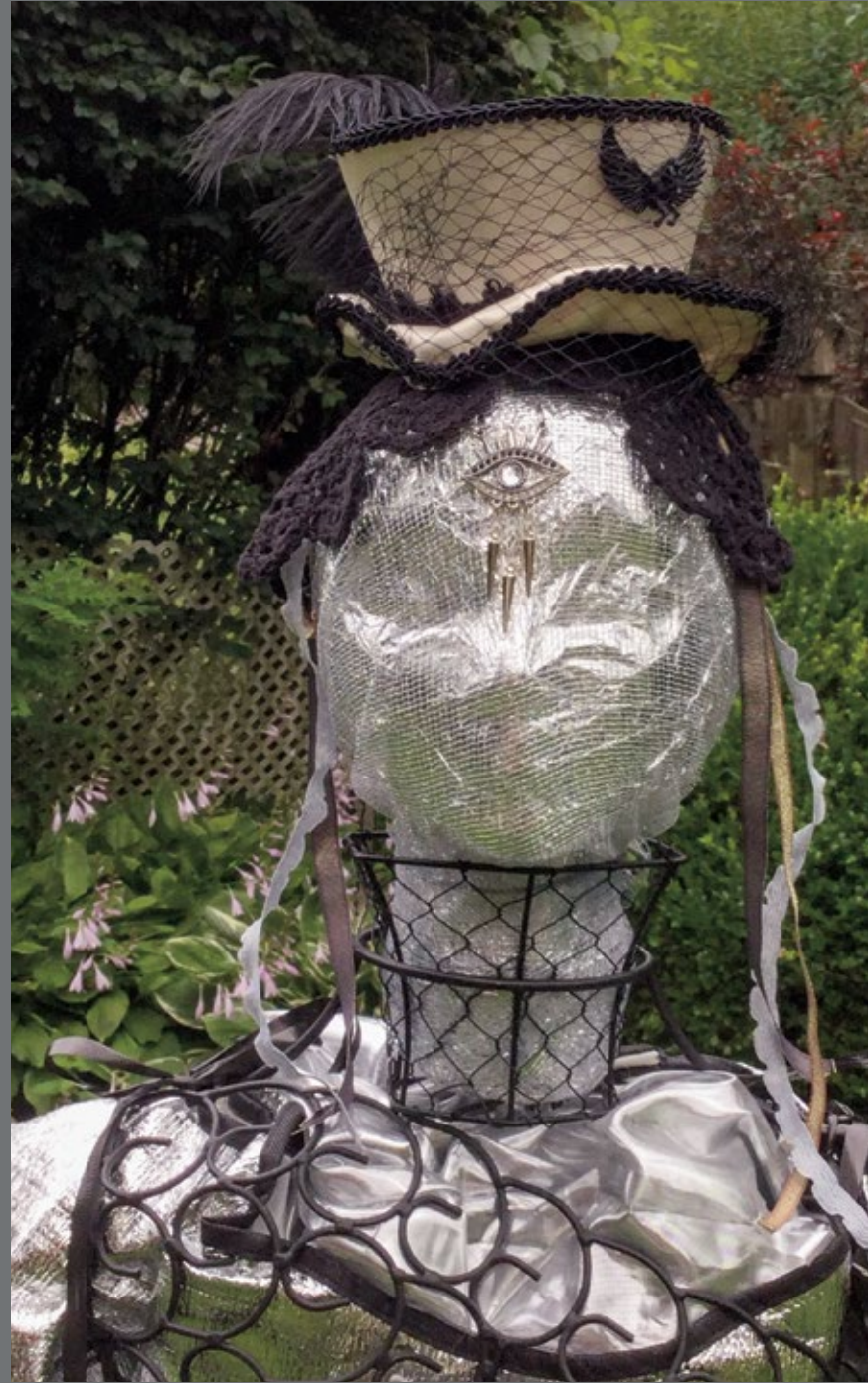
She is an Everywoman and more, extraordinary in her appearance and action, sometimes in a crowd or surrounded by a mob of detractors, but more often an isolated figure inhabiting a tenebrous world. She is a poetic diva; repeated in various guises, concentric to her sisters whose voices echo. ...

Action and image in Spiess-Ferris's work snub cause and effect, there is never an immediate remedy, only the chance of deeper revelation. Spiess-Ferris's figures are rarely whole creatures; depicted as fragments of a body or as hollowed skin or shell. Costuming and appearances are important in her work.

... This question of what animates us is central to her work. Is it our outward appearance—how we present ourselves to the world—that reflects our inner lives?

Spiess-Ferris' figures, armored and constricted in cloth as tight as skin, bristle in quilted or scaled discomfort. Bodies twist, double over and distort to resemble strange bug carapaces, as in *A Small Sound* from 2016. Deliberate disorientation. These figures do not elicit sympathy but do act as a visceral reminder of our actions, our vanity, our numbness or dissociation between thoughts and deeds. There is something powerful for me in the contorted figures, who, like clowns and jesters, use absurdity to drive home a pinprick of recognition of ourselves. ...

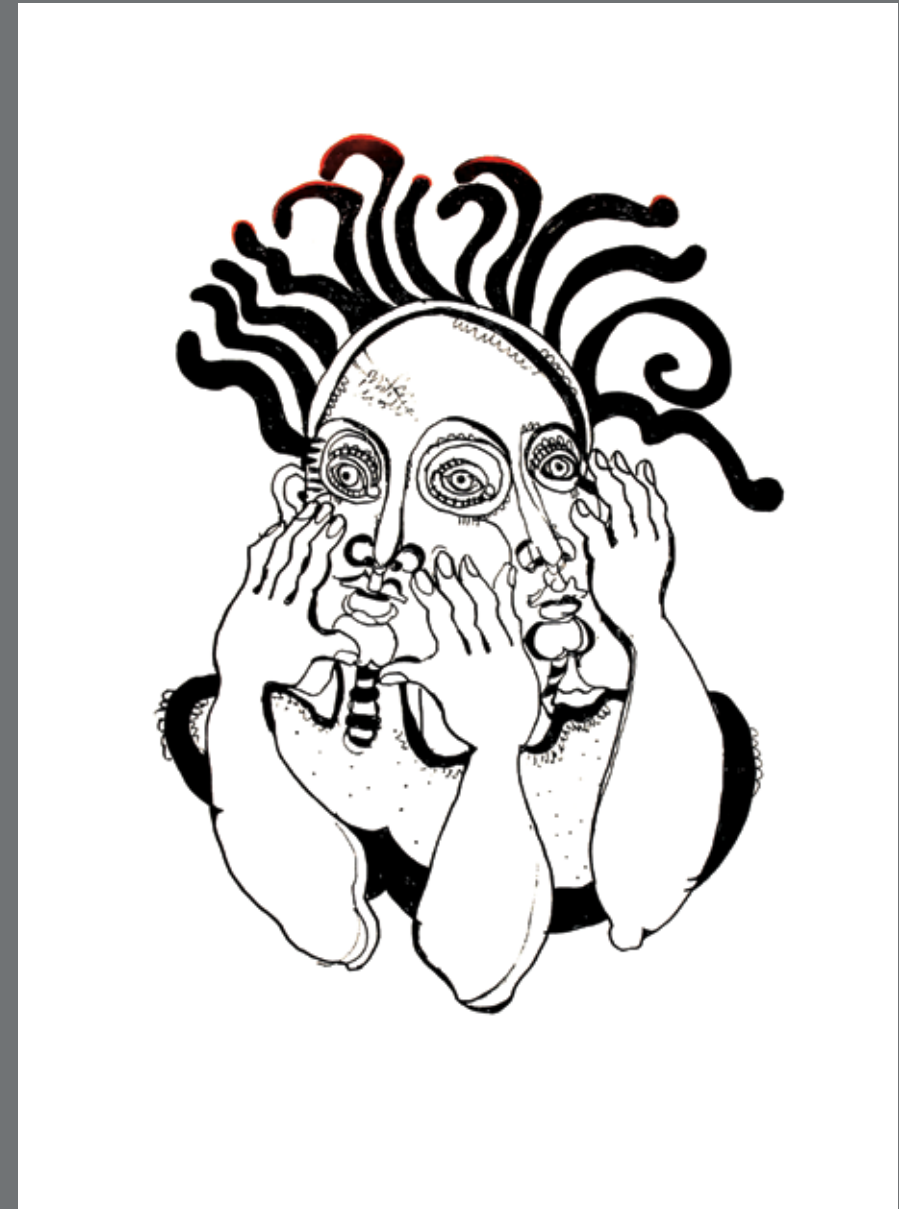
– Doug Stapleton Associate Curator of Art, Illinois State Museum.



**MARY KREBS SMYTH**

I am interested in garments and how they speak about who we are. Each change of "costume" can alter that impression both in our own and other cultures. My use of unique re-purposed materials speaks to the issue. How conscious is our choice and what does it say about us? Is it a masquerade or an attempt to hide, reflect on, exhibit or change ourselves?

*"Who Am I?"; assemblage: repurposed 3D metal mannequin, fabric, wire, beads, paper, found objects and materials, 60" x 24" x 14"*



**ROBERTA MALKIN**

We are all multifaceted individuals playing many roles in life. Transformation and growth happens as one grows older. My figure is evolving with its struggles and life achievements. This piece is a silk screen and part of a set of three depicting figures in change.

*"Duplicity", silk screen, 27" x 35"*



**VICTORIA SENN**

In "Alchemy," I aim to capture my personal spiritual transformation. I have often felt powerless to change the circumstances surrounding me. Through trial and much error, wisdom revealed that the only real power I had was the power to change myself. To this end, I utilize the crow as my spirit guide and totem.

*"Alchemy", mixed media, 24" x 30"*



**ANNE FARLEY GAINES**

A monarch butterfly, escaping the spider, is a transition between sand and water. The Hamsa Hand is a talisman against the Evil Eye. "SOUL" signifies our higher self 'above the dust,' limitless and transcendent. If progressive, the Self transmogrifies from being limited, to experiencing the infinite possibilities of spirituality.

*"SOUL", ceramic plaque, 13.5" x 8.5" x 1/2."*



**DIANE JOHNSON**

The perilous beauty of Sea Change. The Pacific Ocean is the most active place on earth, especially in the area known as the "Ring of Fire". Tectonic plate action ensues, turmoil brews, the inner core of the earth spews lava and gaseous steam. The more turbulent the Pacific becomes, the more exotic creatures prevail.

The exciting havoc of sea change in TRANSMOGRIFICATION.

*"SEA CHANGE", oil, 19" x 15"*

**TRANSMIGRIFICATION**



**PAULINE KOCHANSKI**

When we view the world around us, we always bring our own perceptions to what we see. Scale can transform that perception. My goal is to bring the viewer closer to an object; to have the viewer see it out of scale, to transform the viewer's perception.

*"Trapped...no longer", graphite on paper, 12" x 12"*

**TRANSMIGRIFICATION**



**SUSAN WUNLUCK ZALE**

Orbitals is a visual game of iterations, with shapes resized and lines repositioned, interacting differently in each grid cell. Colors are uniquely layered in each cell. Grid boundaries are accentuated or diminished, depending on whether contrasting or similar colors meet at interfaces. Depths of shapes and lines depend on their relation with the background.

*"Orbitals", watercolor and colored pencil, 28" x 21"*



**JUDY A. LANGSTON**

Tonight the bride-to-be is a party girl celebrating her last evening as a single lady. Tomorrow, much will change for her; at the wedding she'll leave the carefree life and the party-girl image behind, and transform herself into an adult married woman with a more mature outlook and responsibilities.

*"Bachelorette Party at the Bar", giclée print, 12" x 12"*





**HELENE SMITH-ROMER**

The heterogeneous objects placed on the surface of the intricate woven collage provide a serendipitous meeting place as "beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella" (Lautréamont). Objects and fragments, debris and photographs, text and glitter-dissipating objects assembled piece by piece, transforming materials into a journey of reality and existence.

*"Helene Smith (Romer, 1948, Chicago, Illinois) The Artist meets Helene Smith (AKA Catherine Else Muller, 1861-1932, Geneva, Switzerland) The Medium From Mars", collage-mix media, 17" x 13"*



**GAIL BACH**

I painted another Palm Tree tropical-plant landscape with watercolors. When finished I ended up with a rhythmical landscape. I have had this desire to have this added ingredient/dimension for my latest work for years. In this piece I got element without trying. A rare gift given back to me from this piece.

Thank you universe!

*"Esperanza Jungle", watercolor on paper, 8" x 10"*



**MARJORIE GUTTMAN**

Inspired by the titular riddle, Salvador Dali's Venus de Milo With Drawers, and Cornell's boxes, I created an autobiographical dress. We'll never know what Venus has stashed away, but in my boxes are parents, life on stage, marriage, favorite books, mortality, clothes, sexual fantasies, and random shiny objects.

*"When is a Dress Not a Dress? (When it Becomes the Woman who Wears it)", mixed media, 65" x 12" x 8"*



**LAURA CERF-DAHL**

Creativity, like life itself, is transformative. How fantastic and bizarre, that an avocado pit can become a willow plant, (a curtain behind it once merely threads), and that the human mind and hand, with paint, brush and water, can reconstruct that reality to create an image that is its own reality.

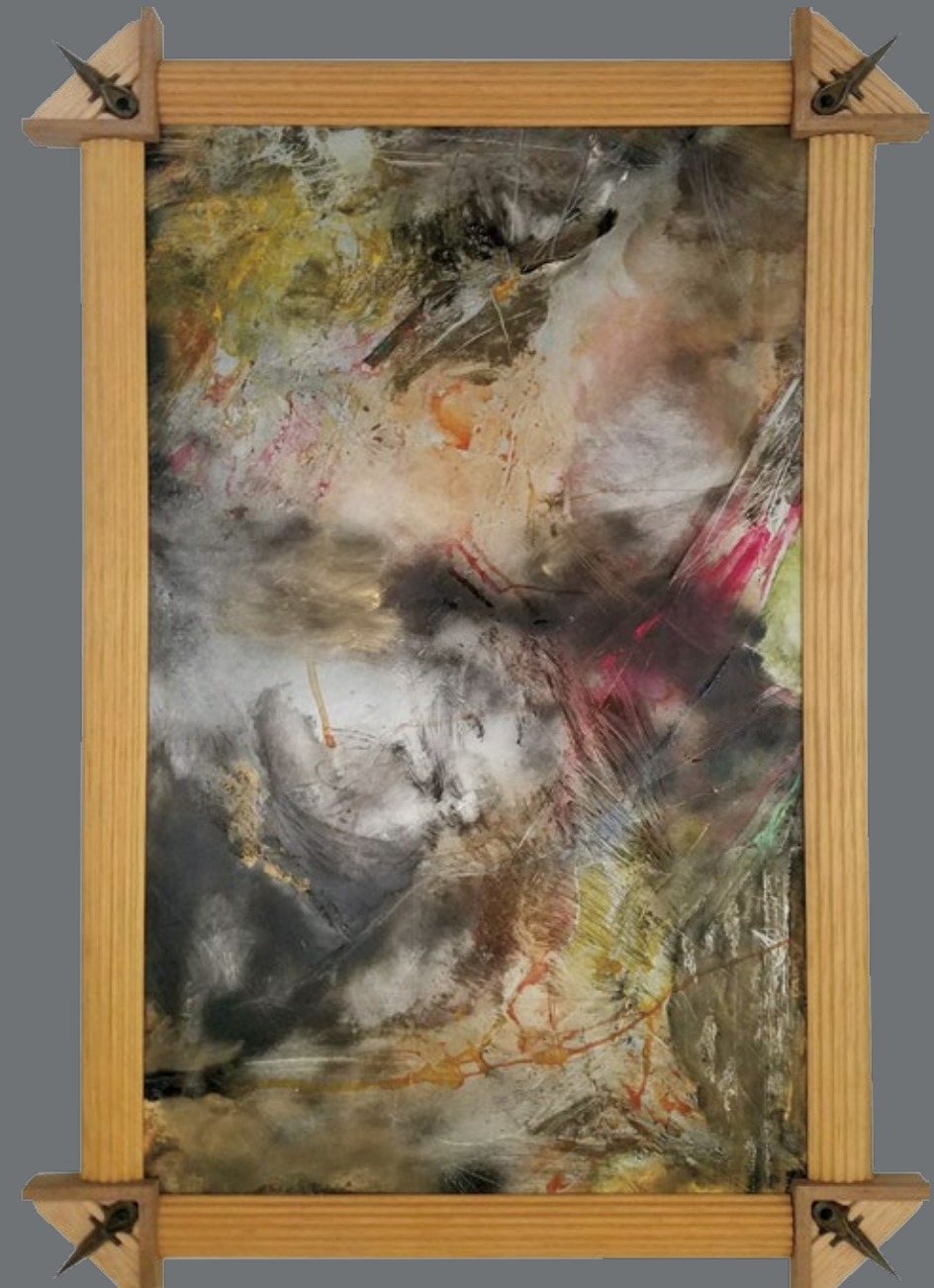
*"Transmogrified", watercolor, 40" x 26"*



**JEANE McGRAIL**

Oblivious: Sunday Stroll by South Pond is a departure from my previous landscapes. In this piece, I manipulated the scene—literally transmogrifying the environment. The addition of speculative / metaphysical / fantasy elements (such as carp and jewels) is a metaphor for the global collective dread, a caveat to those who stroll and explore in oblivious innocence.

*"Oblivious: Sunday Stroll by South Pond", photographic montage, 24" x 36"*



**SANDRA BACON**

"Sudden Storm" depicts the transformation of calm skies and quiet seas. Harbingers of the storm: shifting atmosphere, and movement from the moon, are depicted with an image of a sailboat on the ocean, and a conceptual chart of the coastline. This is a metaphor for our time, painted the day after the election.

*"Sudden Storm", acrylic on aluminum, wood frame, 40" x 48"*



**BERT LEVEILLE**

Is there a process that we go through when entering a new reality; when crossing over or going through a worm hole? Are we being transfused or infused with enlightenment, fear or spirits? Are we connecting internally or on a universal stage? Is the internal stage more vast than our perception can imagine?

*"infusion", 36" x 36", acrylic on canvas*



**CAROL L. MYERS**

Transforming thought, energy and intention into marks and form is the magic of being an artist. This piece is in response to the mediation of how I see myself in this chaotic world — carrying forward the wisdom and love of the Sacred Feminine: transmuting fear and anxiety into a visualization of wisdom and peace.

*"Spirits Rising", graphite and colored pencil on fabric, mounted on board with encaustic wax, 20" x 16"*

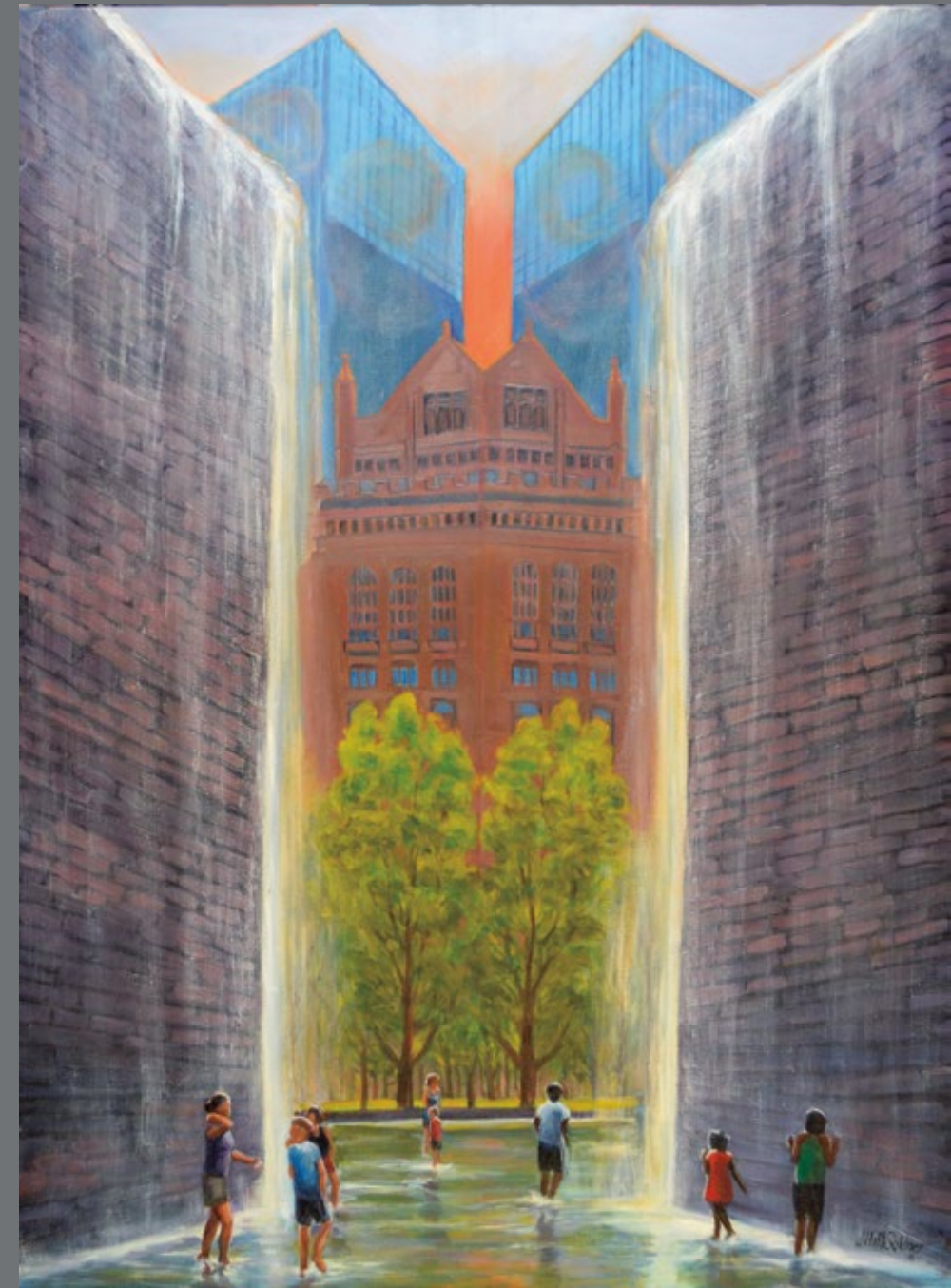


**CAREN HELENE RUDMAN**

From the visceral touch of a hand to the emptiness of loss. The fragility of the body dissolves into memories, life descends into death. Transmogrified. What remains is what makes us human — affected, changed, a conduit. It is the body's connection, separation, and back again, weaving, ebbing, flowing, transforming in an endless cycle.

*"From Being", Mixed Media on Wood, Triptych 3 (12" x 12") or 36" x 12"*

**TRANSMIGRATION**



**JEANINE HILL-SOLDNER**

Continuing my Chicago Crown Fountain series, I've reflected on the changing human place within the built environment. Cities transmogrify into symmetrical reflections, while the inhabitants organically traverse the built environment. Cities are boxes, symmetrical in design, creating divisions within the neighborhoods and their inhabitants.

*"Symmetrical Divisions", Oil on canvas, 48" x 36"*

**TRANSMIGRATION**



**ANOUSH BARGAMIAN**

This work is inspired by the desire to connect with my heritage and DNA relatives and the world around me. While I find my unique lineage fascinating, I also believe in the idea that I am connected to everyone. This idea led me to produce 100% Human. The wax material is ephemeral and connects with the concept of change/transmogrification.

*"100 % Human", screenprint with beeswax and ink on panel, 6" x 14"*



**ALICE REVELSKI**

Luckily, I learned from my first teacher at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago that an important element for a successful painting is for the painting to make a transformation. These words of wisdom were from Chicago Imagist Phil Hanson. To me, transmogrification is an off-shoot of transformation.

*"Gnome", acrylic on paper, 18" x 12"*



**DALE OSTERLE**

Richard Nixon seemed to be a serious Republican candidate when he first came on the scene. A Quaker, pure, reliable and hard working. Only later, when "Watergate" became such a powerful explosion of what our legal and vile minds can do, could we know what evil a person can metamorphose into!

*"The Beatification of Richard Mulehouse Nixon", mixed media on etching, 25-3/34" x 15-3/4"*



**TERRY STROM MOORE**

My art work was transmogrified, when my 40 year old remnant of a drawing was repurposed. When I redesigned and altered the drawing, then it became a new reflection of the past. By reconnecting the past to the present I found myself reimagined in a depiction of my life, that rendered it into a new work of art.

*"Days Gone By", paper, colored pencils, water based color dye, decoupage, spray paint enamel, 24" x 36"*



**REBECCA WOLFRAM**

If you are put in a glass case and raised off the floor and installed in a room in a Museum, you will be an Exhibit. That is how the cow in this picture was transformed and is not a cow any more – besides, of course, it is really only paint.

*"We Are In the Museum.", oil on canvas, 19" x 26"*



**ANDREA HARRIS – In Memoriam**

My paintings are observations of nature and humanity, representing the journey of curiosity and the soul of discovery. It is a perception that each of us is unique in the universe-yet shape, form and color remind us that we are elements in nature.

*"Autumn Light", oil and cold wax on panel, 40" x 40"*



## ANDREA HARRIS

In Memoriam 1947–2017

Andrea Harris was a long-time board member and exhibitions committee member of Chicago Women's Caucus for Art (CWCA). She was reliable and always had a good idea for us. We marveled at how she came up with catchy titles for our shows and pushed us forward when we thought we could not deliver. Here is what she said about her own work: "My paintings are observations of nature and humanity, representing the journey of curiosity and the soul of discovery. It is a perception that each of us is unique in the universe—yet shape, form and color remind us that we are elements in nature."

Andrea was multi-faceted. She was a model, a clothing designer, a marathon runner and bicycle racer. In 1979 she was one of the runners to carry the Olympic torch to the 1980 Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid, NY. She is survived by her devoted husband Bart, her two children and grandson.

– Arlene Rakoncay, CWCA president

Andrea was so important in planning, executing and initiating our exhibition strategies and themes. It is with great sadness that we've had to continue to organize and present TRANSMOGRIFICATION with only her spirit contributing. Perhaps she has embodied a true transmogrification that bespeaks the soul of this exhibit.

– the CWCA exhibition committee



"Self Portrait-Beyond Boundaries", Oil and cold wax on canvas 30"x 40"



Andrea was born in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, in 1947. She began her first career as a teen fashion model in Pittsburgh. After graduating from high school, she moved to Chicago, where she met her husband-to-be, a fashion photographer. She also modeled for a number of photographers, including Victor Skrebneski.

To satisfy a desire for exercise, Andrea took yoga classes, and soon became a yoga instructor. She found that teaching subjects was more rewarding than simply being a student. In fact, teaching defined her life.

Andrea married Bart three months after they met, and spent a brief stint as a photo stylist. She had learned to make her own clothes as a young girl, so she combined this skill with her styling experience, leading to a new career as a clothing designer, creating custom apparel--sport coats for men, and custom dresses for women. In 1976 she was commissioned to make a custom leather sport coat for President Gerald R. Ford. Two years later, she was recognized as an emerging designer: her "Andrea" line of dresses was sold in Marshall Field and Carson Pirie Scott stores.

In her late twenties, competitive juices kicked in. She tried jogging (in addition to yoga), and began jogging together with friend Laurie Rossi. Encouraged by friend and runner Erma Tranter, these three women entered a full 26.2-mile marathon, with little distance training. Andrea eventually completed 18 marathons, winning her age group in several. Andrea and Erma broke the three-hour barrier for the marathon, a difficult challenge for both men and women.

Through her involvement with running, Andrea became part owner and manager of a running store in Evanston, Illinois. In 1979, her interest in sports led her to enter a Runner's World competition: she was selected as Illinois representative, one of 52 runners to carry the Olympic Flame 1,000 miles from Virginia to Lake Placid, to open the 1980 Olympic Winter Games. This was a life-altering event, reflecting her self-confidence and growing compassion for all she met.

After the Olympic experience, Andrea began a fifteen-year career as a representative for Adidas, LA Gear, and finally Reebok. At age 36, after repeated injuries from her constant training and races, she began training as a competitive bicycle racer. She qualified, at age 40, to participate in the 1988 U.S. Olympics in three track-bicycle races, competing in Houston, Texas.

Andrea was 52 when she took a drawing class at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), an attempt to relieve the stress of her work. She had a natural drawing ability, and completed a two-year certificate of drawing program. She attended evening and weekend classes while working 60 hours a week as a manufacturer's rep, running and bicycling, and being a mother and wife for her family. She was also a contributing sports writer for Windy City Sports.

After getting her Certificate of Drawing, she took an additional class in oil painting at SAIC, and discovered her true life's work: she was a marvelous artist, and her love of nature showed in her paintings. She became an environmental lecturer, and mentor to students (grades 5 to 8), by creating a nature tour with accompanying painting classes (conceived and taught for the Lake County School District).

In early 2015, she noticed the first symptoms of ovarian cancer. "The same determination that carried Harris to success in sports and art was evident in her fight against cancer. She was determined to live her life and to live it fully" (Erma Tranter).

Of all her accomplishments, her impact on the art community was strong, and the lifetime spent learning all her life lessons came to bear fruit on her canvases. This passion to paint, and the unwavering love and support of her family, friends, and healthcare specialists were her strengths. She was passionate in all her pursuits, and her proudest accomplishments were her children Aaron and Joel, and grandson Dylan. She dedicated her life to trying to make a positive difference in the world around her.

This tribute, this list of accomplishments, does not truly illustrate Andrea's compassion, her pursuit of art, or her ability to make people aware of our beautiful environment through her art. Andrea did so many little things: for example, assembling ten local female distance runners for two assaults on the women's 24-hour relay record (her team ultimately broke an existing record to be listed for years as the world record holders in the Guinness Book of World Records).

Andrea was a true renaissance woman, smart, funny, perceptive, beautiful, selfless, and strong.

Her final battle was a two-year war waged against ovarian cancer. She endured rounds of chemotherapy, surgeries, an unsuccessful clinical trial, weight loss, heart procedures, hospital stays, and months of home hospice. The terrible time spent knowing the end was near never bowed her indomitable spirit and love for others. Bart said: "Andrea Harris was an artist, an athlete of uncommon courage, speed and strength, a wonderful mother and grandmother, and the most amazing wife and partner I could have ever imagined."

**Andrea's Hope Foundation**

is a 501(c) (3) tax deductible organization dedicated to raising awareness and fighting ovarian cancer. Please visit Andrea Harris' legacy website and help make a difference: <https://www.AndreasHope.foundation>

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EXHIBIT VENUE:

Elmhurst Artists' Guild Gallery at the Elmhurst Art Museum  
150 Cottage Hill Ave., Elmhurst, IL 60126  
630.834.0202

<https://www.elmhurstartmuseum.org>

EXHIBIT DATES:

NOV 5 – DEC 14, 2017

ARTISTS' RECEPTION:


Friday, November 10, 2017 from 7– 9 PM



CWCA thanks the exhibition committee: Jeane McGrail Arlene Rakoncay, Laura Cerf-Dahl, Andrea Harris (In Memoriam), Bert Leveille, Carol L. Myers, Judith Roth and Mary Krebs Smyth.

A special thank you to the Elmhurst Artists' Guild Gallery and the Elmhurst Art Museum; to all of our CWCA exhibiting artists, to Eleanor Spiess-Ferris - our guest artist; to all of our CWCA members; to our president, Arlene Rakoncay for her untiring participation and leadership; and warm thanks to Bart Harris for allowing CWCA to include Andrea Harris's artwork.

The cover of this exhibition catalog is a TRANSMOGRIFICATION (created by bert leveille) of the exhibited ART of CWCA Board Members, Officers and/or Exhibit Committee Members: Sandra Bacon, Laura Cerf-Dahl, Andrea Harris, Jeanine Hill-Soldner, Bert Leveille, Roberta Malkin, Jeane McGrail, Carol L. Myers, Dale Osterle and Mary Krebs Smyth.



# TRANSFORMATION

CHICAGO  
**CWCA**  
WOMEN'S CAUCUS for ART

The Women's Caucus for Art (WCA), founded in 1972 in connection with the College Art Association (CAA), is a national member organization unique in its multi-disciplinary, multicultural membership of artists, art historians, students, educators and museum professionals.

Chicago Women's Caucus for Art (CWCA), the WCA Chicago chapter established in 1973 is committed to supporting women in the arts.

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