

Madison Arts Commission
Request for Funding Proposal

Women, Labor and Compassion

Honoring the women who make our clothing

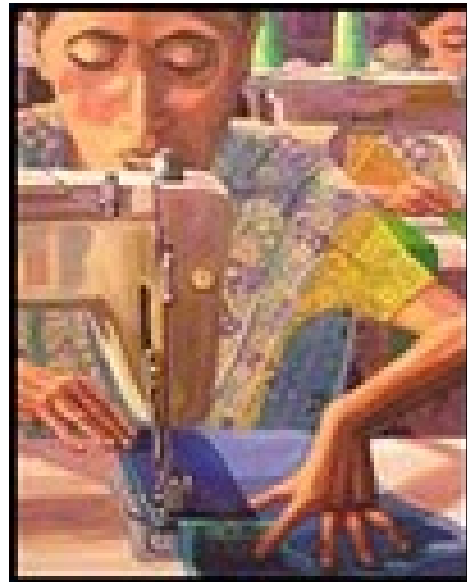
Featuring:

Presente: "she is here with us"

Janet Essley

Portrait of a Textile Worker

Terese Agnew



Bangladesh

Project Overview:

The City of Madison Women's Issues Committee (WIC) will work to bring the paintings of Janet Essley and Terese Agnew to Madison for exhibition in the late summer/early fall of 2011. WIC will seek co-sponsorship from the City of Madison Committee on Sweatfree Purchases as well as other non-profit organizations that share the same goal of promoting global human rights for work with dignity.

WIC is proposing to exhibit the paintings in three different venues: Madison Municipal Building, the Villager Mall, a City of Madison Library or the Overture. WIC plans to kick off the exhibition with a program that will bring together a host of public authorities, labor rights experts and community organizations to focus on the current struggle for labor rights around the world and right here in our own backyard, Madison.

Background.

"On Saturday, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, in the Asch Building in Manhattan. Nearly 150 factory workers, most of them women, died as a result of locked exits and a lack of fire safety.

100 years later, On December 14, 2010, another fire broke out, this time, near Dhaka, Bangladesh, at That's It Sportswear Ltd., where clothing for major American retailers like the Gap, H&M, Target, JC Penney, Walmart, Kohl's and Abercrombie & Fitch is manufactured. As the building quickly is engulfed in flames, two of the six exit doors remain locked, and all of the building's fire extinguishers are either missing or out of order. Hundreds of workers are trapped and trampled by their co-workers. Some leap out of windows. In all, at least twenty-eight people die, many of them burned alive. Dozens more are injured.

Purpose

The fight for safe, decent and fair working conditions as a human right and labor right remains an overwhelming challenge today as it did 100 years ago. Right here in our own State, we struggle to defend the right to collective bargaining. So do the women and workers in Bangladesh, China, Colombia, and the Philippines. Elsewhere in the world, Libyans, Egyptians, and Tunisians are demanding respect for core human rights.

At no time has this common struggle for decent wages, better working conditions, and respect for core labor standards become more relevant and timely than now. Our goal is for this event to be an opportunity to honor the women who make our clothing and those who fought so valiantly before us so that we can enjoy the benefits of having unions today. This event will engage us to reflect on the connections that we have with these women, to be involved and inspired to improve the industry and promote the status of women in the global marketplace.

Publicity and Promotion

The event will be presented as a collaborative effort of WIC, the Committee on Sweatfree Purchases and other community organizations. We will promote the event utilizing public program calendars, website and event listings as well as through social media networks like email and facebook groups. We will also create flyers and produce a limited number of postcards to publicize the event.

Budget

MAC Request: \$1750

- \$ 600 Transportation, Postage, Insurance
- \$ 300 Labor to transport and hang artwork (15 hours @ \$20/hour)
- \$ 300 Honorarium Artist - Portrait of a Textile Worker
- \$ 300 Honorarium – Speakers
- \$ 100 Publicity materials
- \$ 150 Refreshments

In-Kind Contributions

- \$ 400 WIC Staff- Project Coordination and Publicity (20 hours @ \$20/hour)
- \$ 150 Matching funds -refreshments

Participating Artists

Janet Essley, Fine Artist, Educator, Muralist

I began my professional work in art as a commitment to contribute my energy for positive change in the world. Since then I have worked as an art instructor and facilitator for the creation of community murals as well as creating personal paintings and commissions for private and public organizations.

I lead community and school groups in the creation of collaborative works that reflect community values. In the collaborative process, participants experience the essentials of democracy, including the need to compromise and how important each individual's contribution is to the success of the whole.



Terese Agnew, Portrait of a Textile Worker



workers, visible. Her image was constructed with thirty thousand clothing labels stitched together over two years. The idea came from a simple observation. One day while shopping in a department store I noticed huge signs everywhere -- Calvin Klein, Liz Claiborne, Kathy Lee and so on. They were all proper names. I'd recently met two garment workers and realized that by contrast, their identity was rarely thought of and often deliberately hidden. That anonymity could be undone by assembling a view of one worker using the well-known names on apparel she produced. The portrait is based on a photograph of a young textile worker in Bangladesh by Charles Kernaghan*

The project began with a massive campaign to get the labels. Thousands of people responded, painstakingly cutting out garment tags one by one. I used the labels in numerous ways to create the image. For example, text on a contrasting background was used as a gradation, text borders were ironed back leaving a unified block of tiny words to form specific tones, names were used as segments in a line and combined with others like lines in a drawing. From twenty feet away, the composition is a representational image of a remote place. As you move closer, the illusionistic devices dissolve into labels as intimately familiar as your own clothes.