



Corona Selfie by Annemiek Haralson

2020 HAS BEEN A YEAR unlike any other.

Continued threats posed globally, nationally and locally due to global warming have come to a head; the issues of social injustices have led people to fill the streets in protest; and the coronavirus has shown no mercy to anyone.

These issues have marked the year with a tremendous amount of upheaval and uncertainty. Emotions around the world are running high as everyone tries to navigate through these uncertain times.

Not only have people been affected individually, but

paintings, photographs, drawings, poems and essays.

Kurtz remembered how successful this event was and even had a copy of the original *Responding* flier. He photocopied this flier and sent it to other members of the AAG — pitching the idea of reviving the exhibit to reflect on today's issues.

"I sent it [the flyer] out to the membership, and I said, 'Here's what we did 19 years ago; this isn't the first time we've done something like this,'" Kurtz says. "I told

businesses have also had their fair share of turmoil — left wondering if they would be able to reopen their doors and, if able, how to do it safely without losing money.

The Adirondack Artists Guild (AAG) and Adirondack Center for Writing (ACW) have paired up during this time of uncertainty to create a virtual exhibit called *Responding II - 2020* that gives people a safe place to express their feelings and opinions.

Responding II - 2020 came to be when members of the AAG were talking about the different world situations that are currently taking place. This led guild member Mark Kurtz to remember another *Responding* exhibit held years ago.

The original *Responding* was held in November 2001, just two months after the tragedy of 9/11. This exhibit included people's artistic and literary reactions to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The event was open to anyone, and submissions quickly poured into the AAG. The gallery was filled with

them I think doing something in the same idea as what we did after the Sept. 11 attacks, giving artists a chance to respond with their thoughts and feelings, might be an interesting opportunity."

The guild members agreed with Kurtz's idea, and the *Responding II - 2020* exhibit was born. Submissions for the exhibit were open to the public. All were invited to submit visual or written works in response to the exceptional circumstances that this year has brought with it.

"It could be a child; it could be somebody who's never done anything, but they've just made a little sketch," guild member and event coordinator Eleanor Sweeney says. "They didn't have to prove their credential or anything to send something in."

Once the AAG decided that *Responding II - 2020* was going to take place, the ACW learned of the event and offered to help co-host the exhibit so that people could express themselves through words and written submissions could also be included in the exhibit.

"The Adirondack Center for Writing shares office space with photographer Mark Kurtz," Assistant to the Director Baylee Annis says. "He mentioned that he and the rest of the Adirondack Artists Guild were considering a relaunching of a project, and I thought it was a good idea to reframe the *Responding* exhibit to today's constraints. I think that every creative outlet is valuable right now, and the Adirondack Center for Writing was excited to offer a written component to the exhibit."

Not only did Kurtz inspire the exhibit, but he also submitted his own piece of artwork. In the beginning of June, George Floyd was killed, and his death sparked an uproar with the Black Lives Matter movement. This caused many people to react and stirred emotions, even more than the coronavirus already had. Floyd's death led to rallies, protests and riots all over the world.

The Expressions of 2020

By Aja Landolfi

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Saranac Lake ... Responds by Mark Kurtz

Kurtz's home in Saranac Lake was no exception. As a photographer, Kurtz went to the Black Lives Matter protest that Saranac Lake had earlier in the spring and wanted to capture the large turnout.

"In the 32 years that I've been living here, I've never seen so many people turn out for that kind of thing, a rally or protest," Kurtz says. "No matter what you're protesting or rallying about, I've never seen one that big."

He photographed all of the different people, their signs, some of the speakers and tried his best to capture the large number of attendees. After the photos were taken, Kurtz realized that all of the images were a type or responding. So, to make sure the importance of the turnout of the protest was displayed to the best of his ability, Kurtz made a collage of his photos to submit to the exhibit titled *Saranac Lake ... Responds*.

"I wanted something that spoke directly to the issues," Kurtz says.

AAG member Sandra Hildreth also submitted her artwork to the exhibit. Her piece titled *VOTE 2020* was inspired by the coverage of the funeral of John Lewis. Hildreth focused on responding to 2020 by drawing attention to the life of Lewis and what his life represented.

Drawing the image from the funeral of Lewis' casket being transported on a simple wagon across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to Selma, the same one he had walked across in the '60s to peacefully demonstrate voting rights before he was severely beaten, relates to the importance of voting in this year's presidential election.

"I did this drawing for my grandchildren," Hildreth says. "I want them to know about this good man who fought his whole life for what is right and to understand that I don't think I personally have done enough in my life to support what's right, nor has our country."

She believes that producing this drawing and voting are the active steps she can take to support what is right.

Another AAG member who has submitted a piece of artwork is Valerie Patterson. Patterson submitted a watercolor piece titled *Here, But Now They Are Gone* in reaction to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is the first painting that I created in response to COVID-19," Patterson says. "It portrays a young girl, dressed in red, white and blue, wearing a face mask and sitting alone in an old subway car."

Her work often portrays the social and political themes of the current events she is influenced and impacted by as they occur. This piece is no different. Through *Here, But Now They Are Gone*, Patterson strives to convey the isolation and loneliness caused by the virus as quarantine, as well as the resilience of youth and the role the United States government has played in intensifying the pandemic.

Another artist who responded to the coronavirus pandemic is Registered Nurse Annemiek Haralson. Usually, Haralson works in oil paint and paints landscapes. Her piece *Corona Selfie* steps out of her comfort zone. Done in graphite and being a self-portrait of herself in scrubs and wearing a mask, this drawing is very different from her usual landscapes.

"There has never been a time in my nursing career that we had to wear a mask all the time," Haralson says. "As we all know now, they are uncomfortable, hot and itchy."

In her self-portrait, Haralson's mask covers most of her face and leaves viewers only able to see her eyes, which people say are the windows to the soul.

"I think they express the concern and uncertainty I was feeling at the time when I drew this in mid-April," Haralson says.

While her eyes in this picture might show concern, she also believes that they can change to smiling eyes in an instant, and it is all up to how the viewer sees them.

Both the AAG and ACW want people to know that *Responding II - 2020* is taking place to allow people to respond to the issues of 2020 freely. While both champion the freedom of expression, they did not accept any submissions that would be considered hate speech. This includes words or imagery that seek to harm or disparage any individual or group of people based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability or immigration status.

"We believe people should be able to express themselves," Sweeney says. "But we don't want to be the vehicle which is promoting hatred."

On Sept. 4, the art submissions will be available to view on the AAG website, while written submissions can be seen through the ACW website. Some of the local art will be transported to the AAG, and people can visit the gallery during their limited visiting hours to see the pieces in person.

"This is an exciting opportunity to be involved in and experience a gallery full of art, written [word] and visuals when those opportunities are scarce and sometimes impossible these days," Annis says. "Carve some time to read, view and reflect on the work. This is a space for processing, creating, learning and questioning the world we live in now."

"Responding II - 2020" will be on display through the Adirondack Artists Guild and Adirondack Center for Writing websites from Sept. 4 to 29. For more information or to view the exhibit, visit adirondackartistsguild.com and adirondackcenterforwriting.org.



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