ART TEAM

Does it Matter?
From Paul Rogne, Chair, Unity Church Art Team

Art matters because it illustrates the human experience — the wonder of it, the bewilderment of it, the whimsy of it, and so much more. We would not be connected so deeply without the existence of art.

— Kathleen Dinsmore
Staff member, National Endowment for the Arts

Unity Church: First Impressions?
The power of first impressions is well researched. It is difficult to overcome a first impression even with subsequent contradicting facts. What is the first impression for newcomers to Unity Church? The building and the people. While certainly the people are most important, focus for a moment on the building’s visible features.

A beautiful foyer — bright with attractive stone walls and woodwork. Have you noticed the bronze sculpture next to the Sanctuary entrance entitled “Appeal to the Great Spirit”? Paused to read about it? What does it say about Unity Church? The Sanctuary is peaceful — the magnificent wave of wood, a skylight, wonderful old beams, a fig tree, a chalice. Hopefully, all of this presents a comfortable environment — a positive first impression. Walking into the Parish Hall one sees art nearly everywhere. Continuing into the Eliot Wing, up the stairs, and in each room, there is more art.

What does this art say about Unity? First impressions matter.

The Unity Art Team
The Art Team is 15 members of the congregation who volunteer to manage all of the art at Unity Church. That task includes recruiting artists for, and the coordination of, the monthly exhibits in the Parish Hall and the Art Share display. The team also curates more than 70 pieces that Unity owns in its permanent collection and sometimes adds art to — or removes pieces from — the collection. Funds for adding art to the collection come from commissions from the sale of art exhibited in the Parish Hall.

Unity’s Mission and Ends
The Art Team considers Unity’s Mission and Ends seriously. How can the art at Unity Church help fulfill our stated ends? The team focuses on broadening our scope in the artists we choose to exhibit in the Parish Hall and the art we add to the permanent collection. It is our intention that the art be much more than just décor.

Does that matter?
Does the art at Unity matter to you? What impressions are made by this visible statement about what we are at Unity, what we stand for?

If you would like to be in touch with the Art Team, please send an email to artteam@unityunitarian.org.

The arts matter because they help us see the world from different perspectives. They give us empathy and help us understand people, places, periods of history, and issues with which we may otherwise be unfamiliar. They comfort us in grief and energize us in celebration. They are important because they can act as a catalyst for change...they can start a revolution! The arts ignite something in our brains that I can’t explain, but I know it’s essential for life.

— Jennie Terman
Staff member, National Endowment for the Arts

Parish Hall Artist
Ellen Sandbeck
I have always been entranced by the natural world, and have been making nature-based art since I was a toddler. I have been doing papercuts since 1985, when my son was born, and the constant distraction of tending him made it difficult to do any form of artwork that involved drying time. I soon realized that papercutting was my true medium. Though every papercut during that first year fell apart in my hands after a single, injudicious cut, I kept practicing. After that first year, I began sending samples to publishing companies, and within a year had landed my first book contract, with Dover Publications, for a stencil book.


In 2009, I began a year-long project in which I executed a papercut of the historical Buddha every day. Like every project I have ever taken on, this project was far more time-consuming than I had anticipated, yet it was a year of very peaceful meditation. As the year progressed, so did I, and I began to feel as if I was getting a handle on my medium. Though papercutting could be considered rather limiting, and even clumsy, I find its limitations a challenge, and tend to regard it as a game or a sport, as well as an art.

In 2019 I executed a series called "Endangered Chinese Zodiac." I was able to find an endangered representative for each animal in the zodiac. I try to make my work beautiful, as well as heart-wrenching; there is no reason that it should be easy to find so many endangered species which fit such an arbitrary category.