

## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT **Michèle Coppin**



Michèle Coppin

How do we measure time? More importantly, how do we make time count? These are crucial questions Artist-Instructor Michèle Coppin explores throughout her artwork, instruction and outreach.

A Belgian native, she first moved to the States to study fine arts at Rhode Island School of Design and later at Pratt Institute. She began art instruction at the Bronx Museum and several community colleges while in graduate school. Moving back to Belgium and living there for 15 years, she eventually moved to the Twin Cities with a Minnesota-native “kicking and screaming.” Much to her delight she found “there is so much arts programming in the state – it is such a dynamic environment thanks to the Minnesota State Arts Board and to the many other arts organizations.”

While her early paintings were more figurative, her travels inspired her to dive into color, and more specifically, the practice of reverse glass painting. This method is achieved by starting with the details and ending with the background. “The technique is magical because you’re not always in control of the outcome.” Originally working with florals, she has shifted to mandalas and labyrinths. Her work is featured at the Hennepin County Medical Center, the Wilder Foundation



Labyrinth I by Michèle Coppin

and Hudson Hospital. “I want to engage people in the act of waiting and to see time differently.”

This approach steered her instruction and volunteer efforts into working with seniors, prison populations and oncology patients. She became an ArtSage-trained artist and mentor (ArtSage is an organization that teaches artists to work with senior populations) and has worked with seniors with memory loss at senior housing and care facilities. Most recently she joined the MCFTA and City of Minnetonka’s

Dementia-Friendly City Initiative program. “When the grant came along I was so excited.” One program, “Shared Memories,” jointly brings caregivers and persons living with dementia to work on projects – “it’s a way of doing things together and creates something for the person who is left behind. The emphasis is not on memories, but creating memories for the future.”

Michèle Coppin teaches *In the Style of French Masters* and *Flowers and French* this fall.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT **Maryalice Brenk**



Maryalice Brenk

Maryalice Brenk has been a student, board member and volunteer Volunteer Coordinator at MCFTA since her children first took classes in 2001. Starting in the darkroom, she was drawn to the hands-on approach of traditional photo development, but as the discipline transitioned to digital production she moved across the hall to ceramics. “I like getting my hands dirty in the studio.”

She has taken classes with many of our instructors, both in the current building and previous building. Her PhD dissertation “Animals and Hemingway” highlighted her love for animals and her work reflects that - she is inspired by Minnesota wildlife and domestic animals and focuses on these almost exclusively.

She is deeply dedicated to the community and legacy of MCFTA and is thrilled by the opportunities and education it has offered her for many years. As volunteer Volunteer Coordinator she is in charge of staffing our annual Arts of the Holidays Show and Sale and our August Clean-up week.

The Arts of the Holidays Show and Sale offers shoppers the experience of finding unique artist-created items, due to its

“attention to diversity for gift-giving prices, there is everything from the tiniest stocking stuffers to full-sized paintings for your home.” We can’t do it without volunteers and it offers anyone interested the opportunity to support the Art Center’s mission by the giving of their time for up to seven weeks - anywhere between two-hour and all-day shifts. It’s “a great way to meet the artists and people in the community.”

Clean-up week is another event when we need the community to help. An often overlooked necessity for the Art Center, many students arrive the for the start of the fall session after the studios and floors have all been cleaned and reset not realizing the immense efforts of the staff and volunteers to make it so nice. “We can’t open our new calendar year without Clean-up week - it’s a great way to experience the inner working of the Art Center. We have opportunities for everyone, from dusting and cleaning surfaces to heavier tasks of emptying studios.”

Tuition covers only 65% of what it costs to bring these programs to you. Volunteering is a great way to close that gap. To volunteer, you may reach out to Maryalice in person, or by email at [mmbrenk@mchsi.com](mailto:mmbrenk@mchsi.com).