

SUN LETTER

THE PEOPLE, EVENTS, & EXHIBITS OF THE GRACE HUDSON MUSEUM

SUMMER 2023 Volume 32, No. 2

Pomo Woman with Facial Tattoos

The Museum is very excited to share news about a Grace Hudson painting we secured at auction a few months ago. It is an unfinished and undated oil sketch of a young woman wearing a Pomo topknot headdress. Of significance is that the woman in the portrait has facial tattoos on her chin and lower cheeks. It is the only painting by Grace—of which we are aware—that features a woman with tattoos. Tattooing has been documented as a tradition in Pomo cultures, but likely suffered generational loss from the late 19th century and well into the 20th, due to imposed displacement and disenfranchisement.

As Grace did not title her sketches and unfinished artworks, the auction house, for purpose of sale, named the painting *Portrait of*

a Pomo Woman. Since taking possession of it, we at the Museum have been referring to it as *Pomo Woman with Facial Tattoos*. In addition to encouraging us to learn more and share information with the public about tattoo practices in Pomo culture, the painting also will be instructive in demonstrating and better understanding Grace's painting process. Put



Pomo Woman with Facial Tattoos

side by side with Grace's exquisite painting, *The Wi-ly* (numbered oil 412), which we acquired at auction in 2020, one can instantly see similarities between the two portraits. The subjects of both are wearing topknots, with their hair arranged to cascade over their shoulders. In both images, each also wears a necklace. In the sketch it is simply a monotone outline, while in *The Wi-ly* it is fully realized and details multiple strands composed of white clamshell discs and cylindrical pieces of darker-colored magnesite.

The way that both women are dressed suggests they are preparing to participate in a traditional Pomo dance that Grace identifies as "The Wi-ly" (cited by Sy Boynton in his book *The Painter Lady: Grace Carpenter Hudson*). Why Grace abandoned *Pomo Woman with Facial Tattoos* is a mystery. Was she merely exploring an idea that later took shape in *The Wi-ly*? Did the facial tattoos play any role in her decision? Delicious morsels for us to further research and examine. What we do know is that in more recent times Pomo peoples have been making progress in reclaiming and revitalizing their languages, as well as other traditional practices, which may include tattooing. These efforts provide a structure for younger generations to connect more deeply with



The Wi-Ly

(continued on back page)



Sun House Guild

**GRACE HUDSON
MUSEUM & Sun House**

For current hours and admission fees,
please visit our website, call, or email:

www.gracehudsonmuseum.org

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The Gift Shop and the Gala

Beadwork and basketry, fine jewelry and whimsical ornaments, original art and prints, poetry and picture books...the Grace Hudson Museum's Gift Shop highlights California history, natural history, and literature, locally made fine art and handicrafts, as well as Native arts and crafts. Visitors can find a delightful and varied selection of gifts and books related to life in Ukiah and its natural surroundings, and about the history of Mendocino County.

The Gift Shop is open during regular Museum hours and special events such as First Fridays and exhibition openings. While I manage the shop and staff it a few days a week, we couldn't stay open as much as we do, or provide consistent quality service, without a strong cohort of Gift Shop volunteers. Following some retirements, we are currently looking for new volunteers. If you have a few hours a month to give, and would like to be part of the dedicated team here, please stop by or ask at the reception desk about volunteer opportunities. We'd love to meet you!

Please mark the evening of Saturday, September 23 on your calendars, as preparations are underway for the Grace Hudson Museum's 2023 Gala, *Back to the Garden*, presented by the Sun House Guild. This year, our theme embraces and pays tribute to the spirit of Mendocino County's back-to-landers, whose stories and art are featured in the Museum's summer/fall exhibition, *Something's Happening Here: Artistic Reflections on the Back to the Land Movement*. The artwork in the show is fun, funky, and high energy—in the spirit of the time! Our Gala title is, of course, a direct reference to Joni Mitchell's iconic song, *Woodstock*, imploring us all to find a way back to a metaphoric Garden of Eden and a stronger sense of community.

The annual Gala is the primary fundraiser for the Museum, as well as being one of our favorite social events of the year! As in the past, the evening will include wonderful local food and drink, music, silent and live auctions, all in the beautiful setting of the Museum's Sun House and Wild Gardens. Please help support the work of the Museum by gracing us with your presence.

— Toni Wheeler, *Sun House Guild President*

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Meet Chelsee Boehm

On February 6 this year, we welcomed Chelsee Boehm to the Museum staff as our new Curator of Collections and Exhibits. Chelsee was born in Ogden, Utah, and earned her BA there at Weber State University before moving on to a Master's Degree in Applied History at Boise State University. After two years at the Idaho State Archives she became the curatorial registrar at the Idaho State Museum. There, she made exhibits and helped care for the state's artifact collection. Chelsee will talk endlessly about her large black cat, Marco, but she also likes puzzles and bike riding. She looks forward to learning about and caring for the collection and to getting to know the greater Ukiah community.

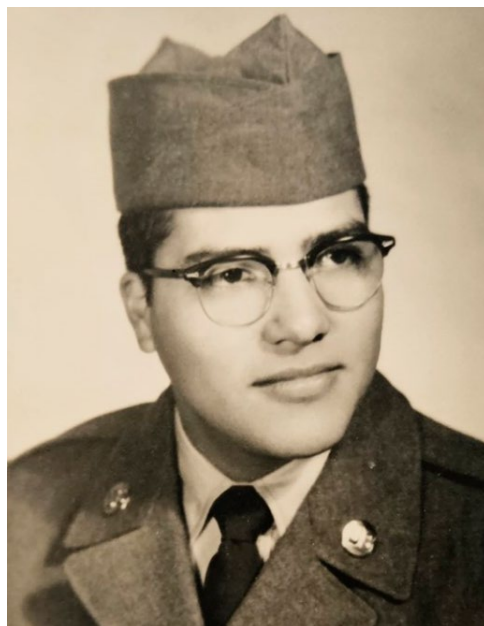


Chelsee Boehm, Curator of Collections and Exhibits

Little Bear In Memoriam

Little Bear was born Nieves Sira on August 8, 1935, on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona. His mother gave him the name Little Bear while living there. He grew up in Northern California in Alameda County, where he graduated from Alvarado High School. Enlisting in the United States Army in 1955, he served three years of active duty as a sharpshooter followed by three years in the Reserves. During part of his time in the Army Reserves, he travelled across Europe and studied mechanical engineering at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. He was honorably discharged in 1961.

After he returned to the U.S., Little Bear spent many years in Reno, working as a refrigeration & air conditioning technician, hospital chief engineer, and manpower planning coordinator for the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada. He loved visiting Virginia City and joined the social group the Virginia City Clampers, becoming their "Humbug" in 1975. During his time in Nevada, he married Milly Simpson in 1968 and became a step-father. Later in life, he loved seeing his grandchildren.



Little Bear in the Army

Interacting with kids always made Little Bear smile. Beginning in 2005, retired and living in Vacaville, he volunteered at the nearby Rush Ranch and Peña Adobe, taking over the tools for hunting and fishing segments of their Patwin Indian program and teaching young students. He taught there for 13 years. Around 2018, he moved to The Sun House Apartments complex in Ukiah, which is right next door to the Grace Hudson Museum. Shortly after, he began to volunteer at the Museum, providing educational programs for student groups,



Little Bear at the Museum

school tours, and First Friday visitors. He even gave a flint knapping workshop once. Very adept with his hands, Little Bear made many different types of tools, weapons, and jewelry. In 2019, a family member honored him with the gift of a Life Membership at the Museum.

Little Bear was beloved by those at the Sun House Apartments, offering talking circles on Saturday mornings (before the pandemic) where everyone had a chance to share. He was surrounded by friends when he passed on February 5, 2023. They recently held a commemoration for him at Rush Ranch, overlooking the Solano Land Trust.

*Thank you to Maggie Kelstrom
for sharing information about
Little Bear's life*



Embedded by Kate Deak



Storyline by Giny Dixon

Up Next: Printed and Stitched

“Life is a patchwork, full of loose threads, stressed seams, and crooked stitches. As an artist, I want to show how these flaws can be beautiful and intriguing in the most human way,” writes Linda Yoshizawa about her artwork, *Behind the Seams 1*, which will be displayed in our next exhibition *Printed and Stitched*, opening October 28.

The show features textile and paper artworks that blend techniques from both printmaking and art quilt disciplines, exploring the overlap between the two methods. The Studio Art Quilt Associates (California/Nevada Regions) and the California Society of Printmakers encouraged their members to create these new works bridging both disciplines and were the driving force behind this presentation of art. The dozens of artists featured are members of both groups. This exhibition was juried by award winning artist Christine S. Aaron and is being travelled nationally by Exhibit Envoy.

The artists—including our very own former Sun House Guild board member Holly Brackmann—use and combine their crafts to explore a variety of ideas including their own personal experiences. For example, Giny Dixon hand stitched fabric she had dyed and painted with vintage family linens in her piece, *Storyline*, while Robynn Smith reflected on a trip to a lava field in Iceland. Other artists tackle political and social issues like the war in Ukraine. Kate Deak attempted to recreate the beauty of the human race in a work titled, *Embedded*. Several artists were inspired by nature like Mimi Gharui-Young who depicted a valley oak tree, or Lynn Hall who wanted to capture the feeling of the Sierras in *The Mountain in Late Summer*: “...when it’s so hot and dry you feel like the entire landscape is just waiting for cooler weather, the colors of fall, and the first snow.”

Special Thanks for Collections Gifts

Received over the last six months.

John “Jack” Harper, for donation of the Grace Hudson painting, *Ho-Y*, numbered oil 402.

Thelma and Robert Levy, for donation of an early Grace Hudson (then Carpenter) pencil drawing of a woman from 1881, and an undated oil sketch of a dog and its nursing puppies.

Camille Panighetti, on behalf of Doris Jeanne Slack, from the estate of Eleanor Phelps Slack, for the donation of a miniature Grace Hudson oil painting of a Pomo baby. The painting was originally gifted to Eleanor’s mother, Mabel, who was one of Grace’s close friends. It is currently on view in the center display case of our Ivan B. & Elvira Hart Gallery.

Leslie Zeisler, on behalf of the estate of Elizabeth Brazier Vann for donation of five Pomo baskets and a small Pomo doll. The donation also included baskets, an arrowhead, and wampum that will be used for educational purposes and for display in the Sun House.



Sketch of puppies nursing by Grace Hudson

Changes in the Sun House

As many of you may be aware, roughly two years ago, the aging HVAC system in the Sun House failed completely, putting many objects at risk from extreme temperature fluctuations. It was determined that electrical upgrades to the house would be required before installing a new and more modern HVAC system. Not knowing how long it would take to complete this work and get a new HVAC in place, we removed as many items from the house as we could—paintings, baskets, books—and stored them in the Museum to ensure their protection. A consequence of this, of course, was that there was far less to see on a Sun House tour.

By the end of last August, the new HVAC was finally installed and fully functioning. Before returning objects to the house, however, we took the opportunity to replace the well-worn and frayed carpet runners that had given service for many years. We felt it was important to do that first, as the de-installation and installation work would stir up dust throughout the house. While that was going on, we also decided to evaluate the condition of all the Sun House items. Art and artifacts showing signs of wear or in need of conservation treatment will be staying in the vaults for now. These include several books, the *Sinbad and the Elephants* painting (formerly over the fireplace in the living room), and the tapestry Mr. Wong gifted to Grace and John (formerly located in the bedroom). We are also taking the time to rethink where paintings should be hung, so as not to unnecessarily expose them to direct sunlight in places where we do not have window shades.

We are also changing out some objects that have been on display for many years for other items. This is a museum best practice, as it allows pieces to rest after sustained exposure to light, dust, and temperature changes. Next time you're in the house, you will notice some new paintings from L.P. Latimer and Helen Carpenter, along with a Dick van Erp lamp that was recently donated to us and featured in the spring *Sunletter*.

Our long-term goals include investigating the possibility and associated costs of creating high-quality reproductions of paintings, such as the portrait of Clarina Nichols (formerly over the fireplace in Grace's studio), so that we can share those historic images with the public while protecting the originals. We will also look at ways to better control incoming sunlight through, for instance, the purchase of new window shades, UV filters, and drapes.

We will continue to slowly add more pieces back to the house as we can. In the coming months, we will aim to host a tour of the house to our volunteers and docents, and provide them more information about the changes we've made. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we continue to care for Grace and John Hudson's historic home. And we wish to thank all of you who have made donations specifically directed for this purpose.

— Alyssa Boge and Chelsee Boehm, *Curators*



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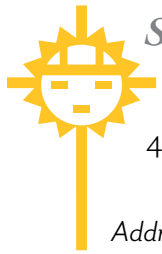
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Endowment Gifts

The Grace Hudson Museum Endowment Fund exists to provide long-term financial stability for the Museum and Sun House. The Endowment welcomes contributions of cash, stock, and real estate, and is in the process of updating its planned giving program. Heartfelt thanks to these recent donors:

Beth & Bradley Best ♦ Jerry & Kathy Hicks ♦ Kelly Thorn

Pomo Woman with Facial Tattoos *(continued from Page 1)*

their histories as well as encourage renewal of cultural rites and rituals. We look forward to learning more about both paintings from Pomo educators and culture bearers.

Purchases of art by the Grace Hudson Museum are made possible through an Acquisition Fund that is overseen by our Endowment Fund board. You can find out more about the Acquisitions Fund and other dedicated funding categories on the Museum's website under the Join & Support tab.

— David Burton, *Director*

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Pencil drawing of a woman by Grace Carpenter Hudson