

Spring/Summer 2024

The Ruthmere Record

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Front Cover Photo: *Tiffany stained glass "Hollyhock" window seen in the stairwell of Ruthmere's garage.*

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC, is a nonprofit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally, through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, arts institutions and the public. Visit ArtsandArtists.org.

The Global Language of Headwear: Cultural Identity, Rites of Passage, and Spirituality *was jointly organized by Stacey W. Miller and International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.*

The Global Language of Headwear

by Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

Since the sale our *Fallen Caryatid* sculpture in 2019, we have continued a successful cycle between creating in-house exhibits (our first being *Beyond Wedgwood Blue* in 2021), and hosting unique traveling exhibits that bring culture, art, and history to our museum from afar. After the incredible amount of work that was put into last year's in-house exhibit, *Roaring Indiana in the Jazz Age*, we are again ready to host another powerful traveling exhibit for the people of Elkhart!

IA&A INTERNATIONAL ARTS AND ARTISTS

The Global Language of Headwear: Cultural Identity, Rites of Passage, and Spirituality is a compilation of hats and headdresses curated by International Arts & Artists (IA&A) in Washington, DC. Here, you can read the description of this exhibit in the IA&A's own words:

"This exhibition features hats from 42 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America, and is a tribute to the stunning diversity of the world's cultures. With a few exceptions, the pieces are from the mid-to-late 20th century, and many are still worn today in parts of the world for revelry, ritual, and the rhythms of everyday life. More than utilitarian objects of material culture, each hat is a unique work of art—not merely because of the skill required to make it, but also as a singular expression of creativity and cultural meaning.



Naga Helmet, India, mid-20th century, cane, dyed goat hair, boar tusks ©2012 Courtesy of Hat Horizons, Photograph by Matthew Hillman

"The profusion of shapes, styles, and materials, as well as the ingenious use of embellishments to decorate the hats, are limited only by imagination. *The Global Language of Headwear* is organized into five thematic sections: Cultural Identity; Power; Prestige and Status; Ceremonies and Celebrations; Spiritual Beliefs; and Protection. Hats and headdresses communicate timeless ideas—not only of beauty, but also of what it means to be human."



Huichol Shaman's Hat (Rupurero), *Mexico, mid-20th century, palm leaves, feathers, beads, velvet, yarn ©2012 Courtesy of Hat Horizons, Photograph by Matthew Hillman*

The profound implications of this exhibit can be explored through a few interactives and programs created by us at Ruthmere, such as a passport activity where visitors can mark off represented countries as they make their way through the exhibit and children's interpretation panels that will give young visitors more to think about as they look at the headwear. We also plan to encourage visitors to wear unique or favorite headwear at our Free Family Sunday, Christiana Neighborhood Day, and Ice Cream Social events that take place during the exhibit. Our highlighted program, however, is a lecture on August 8th with Dr. John McCormack, associate professor of Religion and History at Aurora University, titled "The Fabric of Faiths: How Headwear Makes Religion Real." Register now at Ruthmere.org.

This exhibit will be at the Havilah Beardsley House from July 5 through September 27, 2024, and is sponsored in part by Steve and Julie Bachman. Thank you for your support!

Many Hands Make for Light Work

by William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director & Edward A. Beardsley, Board President

"So what's going on with that house?" It's a question we've heard with some regularity over the past 3 years in reference to the brick building just north of the Havilah Beardsley House. Foregoing a full review of past events (which you are encouraged to explore in past issues of the *The Ruthmere Record*), the short answer is "exciting and profound." The Beardsley Discovery Center (aka BDC for short) is coming soon!

It's taken a while to be sure, but we're in the business of history, and we only get one shot at making this our very best effort. We listened to our community, we've planned out our needs and design, we've raised nearly $1 million of our $1.4 million budget, and with the coming of spring, "action" will be the buzzword surrounding the BDC as construction fences go up and parking spots become scarce due to the legion of workers about to descend on our project. Building plans are in the process of State review and once approved, it's full steam ahead in transforming this 19th century horse stables/carriage house (and 1920s converted residence) into a state-of-the-art welcome center.

The City of Elkhart has become a true supporting partner through the Departments of Building and Codes, Engineering, Zoning and Planning, Parks and Recreation, etc. and, of course, our Mayor's Office. Kil Architecture & Planning and R Yoder Construction have been retained as project architect and general contractor respectively. Danch, Harner & Associates have handled the surveying and site planning, while Frost Engineering & Consulting have ensured that our rehabilitated building will stand the test of time.

The Beardsley Discovery Center will be so much more than just a place to welcome guests and start tours for guests to Ruthmere Campus. It will also be a genealogy research center, a rare treasures gift shop, a cutting edge high tech facility chock full of information, a case study in historic preservation and a cultural anchor for the revitalized Christiana Neighborhood.



Artistic rendering of the planned interior of the future Beardsley Discovery Center, created by Kil Architecture.

None of this would be possible without the support of our community. The capital campaign is far from finished, and there's still a strong need for additional gifts from anyone who wants to be part of this generational project. Join the Community Foundation of Elkhart County who awarded a $100,000 grant, 1st Source Foundation who awarded another $20,000, and the many major gifts from over 60 individuals and families totaling $921,582 and counting.



Spring Concerts Draw From Diverse Sources

by Mark Doddington, Membership Coordinator

The 2024 Ruthmere Spring Concert Series lineup is in place. This year, the Concert Committee drew from a wide-ranging source of artists, while at the same time welcoming back some familiar faces.

As per tradition, the season opens with the Fischoff Soirée on Thursday, May 9. The Fischoff National Chamber Music Association, founded in 1973, has for decades striven to introduce to America the finest in up-and-coming musical talent. While Ruthmere is traditionally regarded as a piano venue, Fischoff brings a mixture of strings, winds, brass and percussion prodigies, as well as pianists. This allows for a richly-flavored opening to our Spring series, now in its fourth full year. An added dash of anticipation comes with the announcement of precisely who will be performing being published only shortly before the concert itself.

On May 23, previous Beardsley Piano Prize judge John Blacklow of Notre Dame will be performing a piano set accompanied by cellist Peter Stumpf, currently on the faculty at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington. This marks the first time either artist will perform at Ruthmere. Blacklow is the latest Beardsley judge invited to perform.

Dominic Muzzi, a former Beardsley Prize second-place winner, will return on June 6. This will be his first appearance at Ruthmere since competing in September, 2020. Muzzi, a native of central Florida, obtained his Doctorate of Music in piano from the Jacobs School of music in 2023, and has been awarded medals in many competitions around the nation.

Rounding out the series on June 20 is fortepianist Daniel Adam Maltz. Bringing his own instrument, Maltz will be making his debut appearance at Ruthmere. With its lighter construction, a fortepiano (also known as a pianoforte) sounds a bit softer than a modern piano. Maltz's instrument weighs approximately 200 pounds, according to him, thus making it easily portable. Maltz has played in many historic homes around the United States, preferring them to larger venues.

All Ruthmere Spring concerts are on Thursday evenings beginning at 7:00 pm. Tickets are $20 per concert for Ruthmere members, $50 per concert for non-members. Season passes are available to members only for $80.00, allowing members to register for all four concerts at once, a total savings of $120 off the comparable non-member price. For information about Ruthmere concerts, or to make a reservation, please contact Ruthmere at (574) 264-0330, or visit Ruthmere.org.

2024 Spring Concert Lineup



May 9
Fischoff Soirée
Sponsored by Wade Mayberry



May 23
John Blacklow & Peter Stumpf
Sponsored by Janet Evanega Rieckhoff & James Rieckhoff



June 6
Dominic Muzzi
Sponsor Needed!



June 20
Daniel Maltz
Sponsored by Marie Smith

Presenting Sponsors
Ray & Mary Pat Mathis

Concert Receptions Sponsor
Jon Smoker

Spring Series Sponsors
Janet Evanega Rieckhoff & James Rieckhoff
Brenda & Michael Tudor

Program Sponsorship

by Jon Smoker, Sponsor/Member

In my humble opinion, I think it is a pretty great deal to be a Ruthmere Concert Series Sponsor. First of all, if it's fall (although spring is pretty great too), you get to slide through the back gate and make your way to the sacred garage for champagne toasts with fellow patrons, and marvelous conversation about the arts, philosophy, and anything else great about America and the free exchange of ideas. All this pleasure comes amidst the autumn air and its awesome colors and natural mystical beauty, so generously on display on the Ruthmere campus.



Jon Smoker, Ruthmere Concert Receptions Sponsor & Member

And then comes early access to the musicians; you can ask them anything you want, between practice time and those who inspire them to the virtuosity which they are about to display. As a sponsor, you have preferred seating during the performance. At times I have felt like the fifth member of a string quartet brigade. There is nothing like it, in all my days in Elkhart, dating back to the age of 51.

But I don't want to be too esoteric. There are other wonderful perks, like being able to wander the home of another sponsor whose property could grace the pages of *Architectural Digest* - what an unforgettable evening! Or that magical night when we could partake in the reopening of the Hotel Elkhart under the auspices of the Hilton Brand - a tour, festivities, hors d'oeuvres, and drink. Unbelievably, all are free perks to Ruthmere program sponsors.

Then there are the EOQs (a.k.a. End-of-Quarter cocktail parties). Again, they're free, with wonderful conversation and libations, often amidst new revelations like the remaking of the old farm horse stables into the new Beardsley Discovery Center or the first sneak peak at the Jazz Age special exhibition.

All told, I love being a sponsor of the Ruthmere Concert Series. It truly is the highlight of my cultural experience here in Elkhart. I would highly recommend it to anyone who wants to enrich their lives and experience something that touches on the aesthetically divine (and the after-concert food is fantastic!).

But perhaps concerts are not the reason you love Ruthmere? No problem. Ruthmere has recently opened up ALL of its fabulous programs to sponsorship opportunities that make supporting your favorite thing about Ruthmere Campus possible. What a great sensation it is to share your passion with others and support a worthy cause. You just have to feel it!

Current 2024 Program Sponsors

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Jon Smoker
Spring Series Sponsors:
Janet Evanega Rieckhoff & James Rieckhoff
Brenda & Michael Tudor

Coffee on the Piazza
Presenting Sponsor:
Tom Myers

Exhibit: *Global Language of Headwear*
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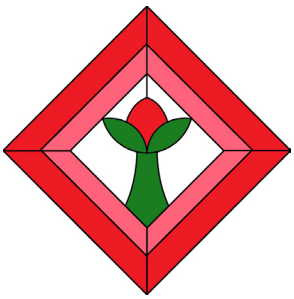
The Ruthmere Record
Spring Issue:
Linda Armstrong
Fall Issue:
Jim Siegmann

Off-the-Record
April: Kathy Pfister

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2024 Quilt Garden: "Discovery in Bloom"

by Bree Askew, Campus Gardener & Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator



We are proud to announce that we are once again taking part in Elkhart County's Quilt Gardens Along the Heritage Trail for the 17th year in a row! This year's Quilt Garden is highlighting Ruthmere's upcoming changes and our positive steps forward with the renovation of the Beardsley Discovery Center.

The design, titled "Discovery in Bloom," is inspired by the four stained glass windows that can be seen on the east façade of the historic Beardsley carriage house property. Thankfully, these windows were unaffected by the fire that destroyed a large portion of the building's interior in 2020. We plan to create a "window wall" within the new Discovery Center that will display these and other historic windows in our collection, such as a few remnants from the original Miles Laboratory building that was torn down in 1971. This blend of glass artifacts perfectly depicts our goal to cherish preserved history while simultaneously moving forward with progressive, innovative ideas that will keep our museum thriving.



The garden will consist of white whisky, rose deep tequila, and red vodka begonias with green FloraMia limon lacy potato vines, all tried-and-true plants that have done well in our garden. We can always use help with planting! If you'd like to volunteer on planting day (expected sometime mid-May), then please give us a call at (574) 264-0330 ext. 109. The Quilt Gardens Along the Heritage Trail can be seen from May 30 through September 15, 2024. Go to VisitElkhartCounty.com/things-to-do/attractions/quilt-gardens/ to learn more.

Successful Start for the Lincoln Penny Story Hour

by Tehillah Moses, Support Staff

We had a great time greeting many young faces at our first Lincoln Penny Story Hour! First graders at the Beardsley Elementary school came to listen to our first lady of Elkhart, Regina Roberson, read a book called *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers and Keturah A. Bobo. Her husband, Rod (Elkhart's mayor), also came to watch her engage with students by reading. Regina's story conveyed well the idea that we are many, but one. We have many different backgrounds that we can celebrate, but we can still identify as equal human beings who work together to make our country great. It was encouraging for everyone involved to hear young minds repeat and expand upon these ideas out loud.



Regina Roberson reads at the first LPSH.

This is a free program offered to 1st or 2nd graders, and each child receives a Lincoln Penny souvenir. If you love the idea of children learning from others with different backgrounds and would like to sponsor one of these Lincoln Penny Story Hours, call Executive Director Bill Firstenberger at (574) 264-0330 (ext. 105).



Artist Jake Webster

Our next Lincoln Penny Story Hour is scheduled for Saturday, June 22 at 1pm where we will have Jake Webster read *Freedom Over Me* by Ashley Bryan to celebrate Juneteenth. Jake Webster is a local artist, poet, and former educator. He will also lead a poetry exercise and sign books. This program is supported in part by a One State/One Story grant from Indiana Humanities.

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Todd Zeiger
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Deb & Meg Zimmerman
Karen Zusman

Learn about our membership and support structure at Ruthmere.org.

Do you have questions or need to update your membership? Contact Membership Coordinator Mark Doddington at (574) 264-0330 ext. 107 or mdoddington@ruthmere.org.

Coffee on the Piazza Welcomes Back Old Favorites

by Mark Doddington, Membership Coordinator

Old traditions and new are on offer at Ruthmere this summer as we welcome back many of our most popular Coffee on the Piazza artists for 2024. In addition to recent discoveries, we are also bringing back a few artists who have not appeared here for several years. As a bonus, we have fourteen Saturdays this year instead of the more typical thirteen. The more, the merrier!

That said, leading off the season is pop/rock singer Chris Burch, who last played at Ruthmere in 2021. Husband-and-wife folk faves 30-Year Wait will be joining us on June 8, bringing their lucky gnome along for the ride, no doubt. Bluegrass quartet The Matchsellers are making a long-overdue return to Ruthmere on June 15. Based out of Kansas City, Missouri, they will be traveling this way as part of their 2024 tour.



Sentimental Journeys performing in 2023.

On June 22, we welcome back Sentimental Journeys, a 20+-piece big band in celebration of Jazzfest, which will be going on at Island Park directly across the river from Ruthmere. Last year, they managed to fit the entire ensemble on the mansion's shady porch. Seating for this event will be on the piazza below, a reversal of the usual arrangement. Wrapping up the month of June, soul-singer Don Savoie returns on the 29th, his first appearance since 2018.

Returning favorite Rachel Eichhorn will open July with her Janis Joplin-esque blues-rock style on July 6. She will be making her third appearance at Coffee on the Piazza. For fans of Ireland, July 13 welcomes joHn Kennedy, Chris O'Brien, and Joel Cooper, all members of Kennedy's Kitchen. They bring a rich Celtic tradition to our stage.

This is also the day of our Ceramic Showcase. For your afternoon's entertainment, jazz ensemble Phat Tuesday will fill the open air for two hours while you browse among the potters on display. (Bring your wallet; this is hard to resist!)

Star Heart will be joining us again on July 20. Last year, due to an unexpected illness, we only got to enjoy 50% of this dynamic pop/rock duo. This year we hope to welcome them both to our beautiful home. On July 27, singer/songwriter/guitarist Matt Campagnoli will be making his first appearance at Ruthmere since 2020.

Sister-duo Broken Wanderer from Goshen, who made a big splash with their pop/folk harmoinizing in 2022, join us on August 3rd. Acoustic pop/rock singer Brandon Ryan returns on August 10, making his first appearance since 2020. Country/folk duo Waterbound are also making their first showing at Ruthmere since 2020.

Pop/folk songstress Adrienne Frailey is coming back on August 24. This marks her first appearance since 2018. Finally, smooth vocalist Abbie Thomas wraps up the summer on August 31. Thomas last performed here in 2022. This year marks her second appearance at Ruthmere.



We would love to thank our returning presenting sponsor, Tom Myers, our generous coffee donor, The Refinery in Goshen, our donut supplier, Rise & Roll, and our partner yoga studio, the Quantum Realm Institute Yoga & Mystery School! This year, we are also continuing our celebration of Ruthmere's 50th anniversary by offering limited edition mugs for any $50 Coffee Club sponsors while supplies last.

2024 Volunteer Awards

by Carolyn Bonanno, Communications Coordinator

This year, we are proud to spotlight two of our hard-working volunteers who have shown exemplary dedication, friendliness, and enthusiasm on Ruthmere Campus: Pat Klockow and Ruth Middleton! They are the winners of our 2024 Volunteer Awards for Education & Hospitality.



Pat Klockow & Ruth Middleton, winners of the 2024 Volunteer Awards

The winner of the Annette Kozak Volunteer Award for Hospitality is Pat Klockow! Pat always greets our guests with warm reception, treating each individual visitor to a unique and friendly experience within our museum. She has been a volunteer for twenty-one years and claims to have had a love of history since childhood. She grew up in Edwardsburg, where Havilah Beardsley's brothers settled and Dr. Franklin Miles had a lodge on Christiana Lake. This historical relationship drew her to Ruthmere, and she considers the knowledge and connections she makes from interacting with visitors to be very rewarding.

The winner of the Laura Funk Volunteer Award for Education is Ruth Middleton! Ruth is extremely knowledgeable about the history of Elkhart's founding, and often volunteers to assist with children's field trips where she can help to educate the younger generations. She gave a different reason for becoming a volunteer at Ruthmere – a love of old houses. Of course, her primary focus is at the Havilah Beardsley House (the oldest brick home in Elkhart), where she spends all of her volunteer time. Ruth likes meeting new people who hold similar interests; the best reward, in her opinion, is giving a tour to people that are excited and engaged – it's a "real high" for her! Congratulations to these two incredible individuals – we hope to continue working with you for many years to come.

Now you know why Pat and Ruth became Ruthmere volunteers… perhaps you have similar interests? We have a place for you to volunteer here on Ruthmere Campus – think about it! Contact Carolyn Bonanno at cbonanno@ruthmere.org or (574) 264-0330 (ext. 101).



The 2024 Volunteer Luncheon



Executive Director Bill Firstenberger addresses the group at the Volunteer Luncheon

2023 Ruthmere Forever Donors

We would like to acknowledge everyone who contributed to our Ruthmere Forever campaign in 2023! We received nearly $50,000 in Ruthmere Forever Challenge Match donations along with an additional $63,000 for various endowed funds supporting long-term sustainability, for which the Community Foundation of Elkhart County contributes an additional 25%. These donations are separate from the Beardsley Discovery Campaign. THANK YOU!

Ruthmere Forever Challenge Match

Abair, Monica
Armstrong, Linda
Arnold, Tom & Dottie
Bachman, Steve & Julie
Barton, Steve & Jean
Beardsley, Doug & Sharon
Beardsley, Ed & Mary Jo
Bontreger, Becky
Bridenstine, Jim & Sheila
Broderick, Bill & Susie
Burton, Bill & Deb
Chandler, James & Anke
Church, Geoff & Kathy
Collins, Richard & Kathleen
Corson Family Foundation
Denlinger, Nancy
Deputy, Richard
Deputy, Robert
Deputy, Tom
Dines, Shana
Eisele, Ann & Nicholas Gonzales
Elkin, Tom & Sara
Emens, Carol
Evanega Rieckhoff, Janet
Evers, Lee & Cindy
Findlay, Judy
Frandsen, Don & Dianne
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Fulmer, Connie
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Knoll, Ann
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Meyer, William & Linda
Mow, Mark & Kathy
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Nicholson, Karen
Norris, Jonathan & Leisa
O'Connor, Cathy (Deputy)
Pletcher, Nancy
Renshaw, Mary
Ronk, Marilyn
Root, Kirk
Rupnow, Linda
Rydson, Matthew
Saltzgaber, Connie
Seely, Dale & Shelly
Shelly, Tim & Meg
Smith, Brian & Lauri
Stahl, Marc & Kris
Stout, Raymond & Teri
Trimmer, Terry
Tudor, Brenda & Michael
Turnock, Ann
Tychonievich, Dan & Lisa
VonGunten, Sueann
Waldman, Cheryl
Weld, Steve & Carol
Welter Foundation
Williams, Sue Ann
Wonso, Jacqueline Kuhn
Wroblewski, Ann
Wyatt, Arthur & Suzanne
Zusman, Karen

Ruthmere Forever Experience

Deputy, Larry & Sherrod
Eisele, Tom & Libby
Estate of Robert Grant
Kegerreis, Betty
Mauch, Jonnai & Brent Hussung
Ruml, Carter
Smith, George & Marilyn
Welch, Scott & Kim

Introducing Ruthmere's Newest Staff Members

By Jennifer Johns, Curator

We are proud to welcome the two newest members of Ruthmere's team, Tehillah and Karen!

Tehillah Moses is our newest Support Staff. She will be working mostly weekends and assisting with our new Lincoln Penny Story Hour program. Tehillah is a local musician with a master's degree in music performance. She plays oboe and English horn regularly with the Kokomo Symphony, Kokomo Park Band, and other groups around the state. Tehillah enjoys sharing her love for music by teaching and encouraging her oboe students. She has also spent several years working in libraries and doing children's programming. As a life-long learner, she is passionate about sharing her love of learning with others. She lives in Elkhart with her husband, two children, and two cats. Her other special interests include traveling to explore different cultures, lighthouses, neuroscience, and gardening.



Tehillah Moses, Support Staff

Karen Shirk has joined the Ruthmere staff as the new Grants Coordinator. She grew up just over the state line in Edwardsburg, Michigan on a farm started by her grandparents. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a B.A. in American Studies focusing on history, English, and journalism, and a Master's from Indiana University in nonprofit administration. She has 20+ years of experience working in nonprofits including museums, social services, and youth organizations. She lives on the family farm with her husband and son. The farm is home to cows, pigs, chickens, 4 rescue goats, a German Shepherd, and cats, which take up plenty of time when she isn't homeschooling her son and helping him with a 4-H project. In her not-so-spare time, she enjoys baking, gardening, crafting, DIY projects, and anything antique (cars and tractors included).



Karen Shirk, Grants Coordinator

We look forward to having Karen and Tehillah on our staff!

Support Ruthmere at New Events

By Andrea Hutslar, Outreach Curator

We have a few new events coming up in 2024 that will allow you to engage with and support Ruthmere like never before. Two exciting evenings - one of music and one of mayhem - will be available for your enjoyment as we connect with local talent in the community.



The first will take place on Sunday, May 19 at the Hotel Elkhart, accompanying a performance by the Elkhart County Symphony at the Lerner. Whether you are a season ticket holder or attending your very first classical music concert, you can become a Ruthmere VIP and create an experience you will always remember.

HOTEL ELKHART

Start your afternoon with a glass of house wine at the Hotel Elkhart Corner Bar before going to the Lerner Theatre to enjoy Elkhart County Symphony's ¡Fiesta Sinfonica! featuring Lalo Cura. Afterwards, enjoy a VIP dinner in the Hotel's Aria Ballroom with a Top-Shelf Diamond Level Open Bar. Registration is open now for this VIP package - just make sure that you purchase your concert tickets separately through the Lerner's website. Visit Ruthmere.org for more information.

In lieu of our Witches' Brew Tea this year, we are also hosting a Murder Mystery at Ruthmere Mansion on October 12 in partnership with the Dinner Detective of South Bend, a comedic, theatrical murder mystery troupe. The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Dinner Show performs in over 90 locations across the country; their home in South Bend can be found at the Embassy Suites by Hilton at Notre Dame, where they perform every few weeks. They also offer private or off-site events and will be running the show at our Murder Mystery in October.

This interactive experience will integrate all attendees as you work to solve the "whodunit" of the evening, and those who successfully crack the case will receive special prizes. While the Dinner Detective troupe only performs narratives that take place in the modern day, we will still have a theme of a "1920s piano bar" and attendees are strongly encouraged to dress up to match the mood. This three-hour event will include food, drink, music, great company, and an entertaining show for all.

COPPINS INVESTIGATIVE & SECURITY GROUP

Details about ticket pricing, when tickets go on sale, and what is included in your registration will come soon! Thank you to Coppins Investigative & Security Group for being our sponsor for this event – it's such a perfect match! Keep an eye on our website, e-blasts, and social media for more updates.



Seeking Out Secret Spaces

By Joy Olsen, Collections Manager

As Collections Manager, my job is to watch, maintain and care for the collection in both museums. It is a true privilege to be part of the upkeep and care for such wonderful pieces. The complete inventory between Ruthmere and the Havilah Beardsley House is amazing and I am honored to be part of their history.

I know that certain furniture manufacturers would include hidden spaces to hide valuables, cash, or private correspondence. Why, I myself own a Victorian dresser with a faux bottom that the owner could hide valuables in. In that era, it's likely that not everyone was able to go to a town bank - or maybe they just didn't trust the early banking system. I know my own historic house has a few floorboards that would lift up to hide a strongbox or something valuable to the original owner of my home.

So, I started wondering about the pieces in Ruthmere. This year, as I cleaned and polished the beautiful wooden pieces of the home, I carefully took the items apart to inspect, clean and peek inside the unit. Yes! I found two secret spaces in original furniture pieces that belonged to the home owners, Elizabeth and Albert Beardsley! One is a hidden box in the dresser in the Guest Room - very tricky to find. The dresser is from the Widdicomb Company of Grand Rapids.



Collections Manager Joy Olsen shows off the hidden box in the Guest Room dresser.

The second is found in two drawers that are in Elizabeth's writing desk from Berkey and Gay of Grand Rapids. Those secret compartments have been overlooked until I found them. How do I know that? All individual pieces of a unit in the museum's collection are given and marked with an accession number. The hidden elements of the desk didn't have a number. Ha! Very secret, very private. I wonder if even Elizabeth knew about the hidden spaces. Why, she might have hidden a receipt from a very expensive purchase that she made for her dear husband or cash that she wanted to give to her favorite niece. I truly doubt any of those speculations apply to Elizabeth, but it is fun to imagine what those secret spaces were created for. How many writing desks held secret love letters to pass to someone at a social gathering?



Joy pulls out the hidden box from behind a drawer in Elizabeth's writing desk.

If you own a vintage piece of furniture, I encourage you to peek inside to see if there is a secret space. You might find a sweet love letter written from your great-grandfather to his sweetheart. But beware, it might be to someone you don't know! Share with me if you do - I promise, I won't tell!

Ruthmere
An Experience in History, Art & Architecture
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2024 Ruthmere Ceramic Showcase Update

By Carolyn Bonanno, Communications Coordinator

The 2024 Ruthmere Ceramic Showcase is slated for Saturday, July 13, 2024, on the Ruthmere grounds. We are incredibly pleased to announce our new partnership with the Northern Indiana Clay Alliance. This partnership is committed to making this one of the premier ceramic events in our region. One of the most difficult tasks for Ruthmere each year is securing artists to participate; NICA will be registering clay artists from their talented membership.

Ruthmere is making enhancements to the event with a focus on making it the best possible experience for artists. The event will take place on the East Green located in the same area as the Quilt Garden. Ruthmere has secured four large tents for 6 to 8 artists to be grouped together per tent (24 – 32 artists total). This will eliminate the need for artists to supply individual tents and protect against inclement weather. Clay demonstrations, food vendors, live music (see Coffee on the Piazza article on page 10) and plein air artists will add to the day's enjoyment. For the first time, there will be multiple purchase awards selected by donors that financially support the event. Become a donor of one of the purchase awards and help us recognize the best in the show and get first choice of your favorite clay art. Contact Carolyn Bonanno if interested at cbonanno@ruthmere.org/574-264-0330 ext. 101.

Northern Indiana Clay Alliance

Thank you to our presenting sponsors, Jack & Karen Cittadine!



Communications Coordinator Carolyn Bonanno and Membership Coordinator Mark Doddington admire pottery at the 2023 Showcase.