

# SUN LETTER

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

SPRING 2023 Volume 32, No. 1

## Finding a New Path

Driving along the winding, narrow, and secluded dirt roads of Greenfield Ranch, high above the Ukiah Valley to the west, homesteads are visible only occasionally. David Burton and I both mused about what it might be like to live out there among the oaks and manzanitas, open space and wide vistas. Greenfield Ranch was established in 1972 and Back to Landers soon made their own homes on the diverse parcels they purchased, coming together periodically for community events like a summer solstice celebration. We were on our way to meet and interview two of them who are also artists.

Since November 2021, David and I have been traveling around the county to meet Back-to-Land artists as we work to develop an exhibition which will open this May that explores the movement through art and craft. The seed for this exhibit was planted years ago when some of those who were part of the counter-culture migration to Mendocino County approached the Museum about doing a show, reflecting on this part of the region's history.

In the late 1960s and into the 70s, young people, often from cities, were ready to turn on, tune in, and drop out. Many of them moved to rural areas in places like Maine, Vermont, Colorado, and Mendocino County. They wanted a new and deliberate life far away from corporate ladders. They wanted to live in nature, grow their own food, milk their own goats, build their own houses, grow and smoke their own weed, and seek their own spirituality. They wanted to find meaningful communities on communes or in community theatre and art groups. They created their own schools. They often advocated for political and social causes, too.

When they first arrived, their long hair might land them in a bar fight. But over time they, and the things they created, melded into the fabric of Mendocino County and significantly shaped the culture of the county. Ukiah's Co-op? Founded by Back to Landers. Ukiah Players Theater? Also started by Back to Landers. The Willits Art Center? You guessed it, created by Back to Landers.

The lifestyle they lived required creativity as they sought to solve old problems and find solutions to new challenges of life on the land. A small number were artists. After meeting many of them and hearing about their stories, we have started to get a better picture of the Back to Land movement, how it shaped the county, and also the nuances within it. For example, some Back to Landers consider themselves hippies, while others find the word troublesome and never identified that way. Some came to get away from the hard drug scene in urban areas, while others used the income from cultivating marijuana to financially support themselves. Back to Land is not a one-size-fits-all definition, but more of an umbrella term.

I imagine all of the artists we have met so far would have created art wherever they were. However, the reasons they moved to Mendocino County, and the act of doing it, often influence their art. Many were inspired by the nature they sought and experienced in moving to a rural area. Linda McDonald paints towering redwoods. Some saw their crafts as a part of a simpler, more personal, lifestyle, like Adriane Nicolaisen, who fabricated her own textiles. Others, like painter Doug Volz, were inspired by psychedelic trips and the feelings of earthly and spiritual interconnectedness it engendered. Many explored and

*(continued on back page)*



*Naked Honesty, 1976, by Doug Volz (courtesy of the artist)*



Sun House Guild

GRACE HUDSON  
MUSEUM & Sun House

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## Warming Up for Spring, Summer & Fall

As we put this edition of the *Sunletter* together in early February, it's still winter, but our thoughts turn to warmer seasons as we grow our plans for the year. Sun House Guild board members have begun working on our first fundraiser of 2023, in conjunction with Ukiah Players Theatre's production of *Alice in Wonderland*. Please join us on April 5 for a preview performance of the show. This event has been a favorite in the past, and we're delighted to be able to hold it again as we all continue to emerge from the pandemic. And, of course, we're equally delighted that UPT is gearing up for a full season of shows; we've missed our community theater. Save the date! Information about tickets will be available in the near future.

In June, the Guild will host its second *A Corner in the Gardens* event. This plein air art-in-action garden party was a great success last year, in spite of somewhat chilly temperatures and a bit more wind than expected. We've moved the date from early May to early June in the hopes the weather will be more conducive to outdoor art making and social gathering. The date will be announced soon. In the meantime, get your garden party hat ready!

We have already established a date for our fall gala, which will be held on Saturday, September 23. This year's event will take its theme from the Museum's summer/fall exhibition focusing on the art and lives of those who came to Mendocino County in the 60s, 70s, and early 80s, as part of the region's Back to Land Movement. Many of them are still very much a part of our community.

At our February First Friday we celebrated the opening of the Museum's current exhibition, *The Curious World of Seaweed*, with a reception that included photographer Josie Iselin, who created the show in collaboration with Exhibit Envoy. Josie's images enchanted visitors. The addition of related pieces by local artists includ-



Museum visitors enjoy *The Curious World of Seaweed* at the opening reception.

ing Monique Sonoquie and Laura Fogg, and a collection of traditional Pomo seaweed collecting baskets from the Museum's collections, enhanced the experience, as did the beautiful presentation of sushi from exhibition sponsor Oco Time Restaurant. Thanks to all who attended!

And many thanks to Sun House Guild board members and the many volunteers who help organize, plan, and work throughout the year to put these and other events together.

— Toni Wheeler, *Sun House Guild President*

# Meet Isabel Vineyard

For those of you who haven't had a chance to meet her yet, Isabel Vineyard joined our Museum staff in August 2022, as one of our two part-time receptionists and volunteer coordinators. She has lived in Ukiah for most of her life, returning here after graduating from Chico State University. Among her many interests, she enjoys spending her days exploring nature with her partner and dogs, and absolutely loves baking, sewing, crocheting, and gardening. While only having been on the job now for a little more than six months, she has brought a diversity of skills and talents to the position. Asked how her experience has been so far, she said, "I am thrilled at the opportunity to be surrounded by so much local talent and creativity. It is an honor to be a part of the Grace Hudson Museum team." Welcome, Isabel. We are so happy to have you with us!



Isabel Vineyard, Receptionist and Volunteer Coordinator

## Many Thanks to These Recent Donors

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# Thank You to Our 2022 Gala Donors

We'd like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who attended and participated in our 2022 Gala, *Celebrating Pomo Arts*. The eagerly awaited return to an in-person Gala was a smashing success on all levels. A very special thanks to our wonderful auctioneer, State Senator Mike McGuire! And a huge thank you, to all, for your confidence in and commitment to the Grace Hudson Museum!

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Tonight Meadowlark Looks Out Over Xabatin, Meyo Marrufo, our signature image for the 2022 Gala

## Special Thanks to Our Gala Sponsors



*The Eversole Family*



# Our Indispensable Volunteers

Following three years of limited social interaction due to the pandemic, Museum staff and Sun House Guild board members were at long last able to celebrate our wonderful volunteers with an appreciation event this past December. The occasion provided an opportunity to connect with and thank so many of the people who help us with numerous aspects of our daily museum work that positively impacts the public.

Our Wild Gardens volunteers lend many hands (and bent knees) throughout the year to ensure this vital outdoor educational area remains full of life. Our Gift Shop volunteers assist visitors in finding a memento, a distinctive artwork or craft by a local artist, or books that range from Pomo basketry and culture to the plant and animal life of Mendocino County, from Carpenter-Hudson family history to imaginative stories that engage youth. Our volunteers help with exhibition installation—condition reporting objects or hanging exhibit labels. Recently, Ana Llorente volunteered her time to complete the graphic design for our publication *Gathering Time: Pomo Art During the Pandemic*. And for most of last year, Alice, a high school student, worked on many non-glamorous behind-the-scenes projects as well as assisted with exhibits.

Grace Hudson Museum volunteers also support visitors in better understanding and imagining the lives of Grace and John Hudson through tours of the historic Sun House and by assisting with school tours and educational programs. Students and First-Friday attendees always enjoyed spending time with Little Bear and friends, listening attentively to learn about Native American toys and tools, then playing a Pomo clapperstick or trying their hand at operating a Native pump drill. In a thank you note, one student wrote to us, “The Pomo tools were really cool.”

At December’s volunteer appreciation event, we recognized Deborah Leland as our 2022 Volunteer of the Year. Over many years, Deb has lead countless school tours, introducing students to Grace Hudson’s artwork and home, to Pomo basketry, and, last fall, to our *Gathering Time* exhibition. She is always incredibly flexible when we ask her to lead new programs. And, in addition, she and fellow Ukiah Garden Club members help to maintain the Circle Garden directly in front of the Museum.

Many of our volunteers have been donating their time and energy to our Museum for over a decade. Whether well-seasoned or new, we are always grateful for their skills and the time they give to preserve and share the stories of the Grace Hudson Museum. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact either of our Receptionists and Volunteer Coordinators, Kristen Marrow or Isabel Vineyard, at (707) 467-2836.



Sun House Guild President Toni Wheeler presents Deborah Leland with her Volunteer of the Year Award and accompanying gift.

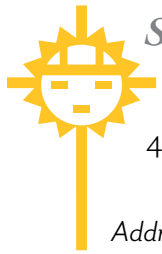
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*This issue of the Sunletter is dedicated to the memory of Little Bear, who recently passed away.*



Sun House Guild

GRACE HUDSON MUSEUM

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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:

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## Finding a New Path *(continued from Page 1)*

followed their own path in their art, just as they had chosen to live life in their own way.

Today, as we continue to visit artists, it's always a treat to see a homestead, now well-lived in, and eat an apple from an old but well-tended grove. Most artists, though, have moved into or closer to town. They are no longer newcomers, but for many years have been an integral part of our county's life.

— Alyssa Boge, *Curator of Education & Exhibits*

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