

SUNLETTER

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

SPRING 2024 Volume 33, No. 1

The Krenov School: Lessons in Craft

— Alyssa Boge, *Curator of Education & Exhibits*

On March 30, we will open a new special exhibition, *Deep Roots, Spreading Branches: Fine Woodworking of the Krenov School*, with an opening reception following on Friday evening, April 5. You will be able to admire and look carefully at cabinets and chairs, crafted meticulously by former students and instructors of the Krenov School of Fine Furniture in Ft. Bragg. You'll be able to feel the buttery smoothness of opening a finely-made drawer. You'll be able to hear the stories and



Layered Space, madrone cabinet by Austin Schuler

experiences of those who lived and still live it. And you'll be able to learn about the history of the school and what goes on there.

That history begins with James Krenov. Born in Siberia, he spent his middle years in Sweden where he delved deeply into the craft of woodworking, developed his own thoughts on the matter, and wrote *The Cabinetmaker's Notebook*. As he grew older, he wanted to teach. The Mendocino coast had a budding woodworking community and a local group advocated that the College of the Redwoods start a fine woodworking program with Jim Krenov at the helm.

Over 40 years later, the instructors are different and Mendocino College oversees the school, but the building itself, the curriculum, and even the facial hair and attire of the students remains remarkably similar. There have been changes of course, but the school still teaches many of Jim's core ideas—that there is value in making something incredibly well and to the best of your abilities, which you can do by responding to the individual piece of wood using very sharp hand tools.

As I write this, my world is hectic, coordinating with woodworkers, writing exhibition labels, solidifying programs, reviewing oral histories, and working with our advisory committee. The committee, comprised of Laura Mays, the school's director; David Welter and Kerry Marshall from the Krenov Foundation; and Tina Krenov, the daughter of the man after whom the school is named, have been generously donating their time and knowledge. At this time, it is easy for me to feel rushed, to get lost in the details and the what-ifs, to worry that it won't be perfect or that it won't all come together. Dear reader, spoiler alert, it will not be perfect. As I've been working to pull everything together, I've been reflecting a bit on the similarities between building a fine piece of furniture and developing an exhibition. There are obvious differences, but there is an element of craft to both. And I've been

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James Krenov (in the white shirt) instructs Creighton Hoke in the school's workshop.



Sun House Guild

**GRACE HUDSON
MUSEUM & Sun House**

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please visit our website, call, or email:

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Looking Back and Looking Forward

If you're reading this *Sunletter*, you probably already know that the Grace Hudson Museum, Sun House, and Wild Gardens are widely recognized as a valuable cultural resource for area residents and out-of-town visitors. But many of you may not know about the roots and evolution of the Sun House Guild.

In 1978, just a few years after the City of Ukiah acquired the Carpenter-Hudson property, the Sun House Guild was formed as a "friends of" fundraising organization comprised of community members who understood the unique legacy of the Carpenter and Hudson families, the importance of their influence in the region, and, of course, the brilliance of Grace Carpenter Hudson as a painter who primarily depicted and documented Pomo peoples and their lifeways.

In those early years, many of the Guilders also participated as Sun House docents. This was at a time when there was no museum structure on the campus and the historic home was called the Sun House Museum. A number of Guilders would later be involved in the campaign to create—and then later expand—the museum we know today. Over the years, the Sun House Guild has been active year-round, presenting fun and successful fundraising events, with the ongoing goal of engaging the community in support of the Grace Hudson Museum's exhibits and programs.

Since January of this year, Guild board members have been working on our 2024 events calendar. Coming in June, we are delighted to partner again with Ukiah Players Theater for an evening that has been a favorite event in the past. Please plan to join us at the theater on June 20 for a preview performance of the charming and funny *Calendar Girls*, to include wine, heavy appetizers, dessert, and coffee. Save the date, and keep an eye out for ticket information!

Looking further ahead, we are exploring giving our annual September Gala and also our December Holiday Open House slightly different looks. We'll be sharing more news about both in the next *Sunletter* and on the Museum's website and social media. I want to give a huge thanks to my colleagues on the Sun House Guild board for the time and effort they devote all year long, and would also like to encourage the community at large to talk with Guild board members or Museum staff about opportunities to participate and be involved.

— Toni Wheeler, *Sun House Guild President*

*Information on Museum events
can be found on the Museum's website at
gracehudsonmuseum.org.*

Three Days in Boise

Last September, the Museum's two curators, Alyssa Boge and Chelsea Boehm, attended the 2023 American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) conference in Boise, Idaho. The conference—titled, I, Too, Am America—sought to explore ways that museums can promote diversity, equity, access, and inclusion, through programs and outreach, community partnerships, and also through workplace policies. With nearly 60 sessions over four days, as well as tours of local museums and historic sites, and time for professional networking, there were a considerable number of learning opportunities from which to choose. The Sunletter asked them both to reflect a bit on their experience.



Chelsea and Alyssa pose outside the registration desk at the AASLH conference in Boise.

Chelsea: One session that I found memorable was called, “Truth and Transformation: How Truth Telling Can Inspire Advocacy,” led by Darrin “DJ” Sims of The National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, GA. Sims talked about the work of the Truth and Transformation Initiative, which explores instances of “racial terror and forced labor” in Atlanta.

Through historical research and community partnerships, the Center is working to tell stories of people (including Black Americans forced to work under convict leasing, and the victims of a 1906 race massacre) that have gone untold and raise awareness of the complicated history of Atlanta.

I was touched by the stories and the deeply meaningful work that the Center is doing. I’d like to see if that the same model of historical research and community participation can help the Grace Hudson Museum explore stories of people that haven’t been told before.

I not only attended the conference, but was also a presenter, participating in the sessions “Half the Story: LGBTQ+ People in the Pacific Northwest” and “Exploring the Trailblazing Women of Idaho.” In both, I discussed work I did when I was at the Idaho State Museum. Each of us who presented spent months together on planning and preparation.

Alyssa: I really enjoyed the opening plenary, held in a restored historic Egyptian-themed theater, led by very enthusiastic hosts. I sat next to someone from Eastern State Penitentiary and learned about their postcard program, mailing postcards to people who are currently incarcerated. On stage, there were rotating presenters, highlighting the theme *I, Too, Am America*, including a reading of the Langston Hughes poem, *I, Too*.

Kurt Ikeda, a National Park Service ranger stationed at Minidoka National Historic Site (a former Japanese internment camp), riffed off the Hughes poem, expressing what he knows about the experiences of those confined at his site. Ben Garcia reminisced about his experience as a gay youth finding a sense of belonging in a museum through connections with art. Now he tries to create this sense of belonging as the Executive Director of the American LGBTQ+ Museum in New York. Nolan Brown, a Shoshone-Bannock Tribal citizen and Anishinaabe descendent, talked about his efforts to preserve his cultural heritage by working with historic sites in creating interpretive signage to be shared with a larger audience. Cherie Buckner-Webb, the first African American elected to the Idaho State Legislature, told stories about facing racism while growing up and living in Boise, and the role that African Americans have had in shaping the state.

Professional conferences provide opportunities for people to be around peers, refresh themselves, and open their minds to new ideas and to practices that can be applied or adapted at their own institutions. It's also worth noting that, while at the conference, Chelsea and Alyssa witnessed the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society receive an AASLH Excellence in History Leadership Award for a collaborative project that included former Grace Hudson Museum Director, Sherrie Smith-Ferri, and the Dry Creek Band of Pomo Indians. Congratulations to Sherrie, and all who were involved!

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Gala 2023 Paddle Pledges

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Kate Northcott

Margaret Pedroni

Joe & June Prestino

Katarzyna Rolzinski

Neelum Salman

Bernadette Soloman

Mark Your Calendars

Thursday, March 28, 7:00–9:00 pm

Writers Read

The March program will feature readings from the anthology, *Dear Human at the Edge of Time: Poems on Climate Change in the United States* (2023, published by Paloma Press). The book features over 70 contributors, including Union of Concerned Scientists director Erika Spanger and U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón. Check our website for more details.

Friday, April 5, 5:00–8:00 pm

Opening Reception

On this First Friday we celebrate our newest exhibition, *Deep Roots, Spreading Branches*, about the history of the Krenov School of Fine Furniture. Visitors will have a chance to meet many of the artists represented in the show. Clay Hawkins will provide musical entertainment and refreshments will also be available.

Thursday, April 18, 6:00–7:00 pm VIRTUAL

The Song And Dance:

Krenov's American Dreams

Before planting himself on the Mendocino Coast, James Krenov spent the late 1960s and 70s traveling to the U.S., looking for an appreciative audience and enthusiastic student body. Krenov biographer Brendan Gaffney will talk about this time which led to the establishment of the woodworking program at the College of the Redwoods, now the Krenov School.

Saturday, May 25, from 7:15 am–5:00 pm

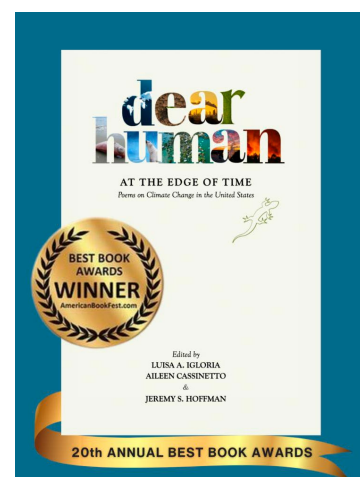
Bus Trip To The De Young Museum

This year's bus trip to the de Young coincides with their special exhibition, *Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style*. This major show features world-class designers with designs that span from classic stateliness, to modern, to avant-garde. A companion exhibition, *Irving Penn*, showcases the fashion, portraiture, and documentary photography of one of America's greatest photographers and a long-standing *Vogue* contributor. More information to follow.

Thursday, June 20, starting at 6:00 pm

Calendar Girls: A Museum Fundraiser

Ukiah Players Theatre is once again graciously hosting the Museum for a preview performance, this year of their summer production of *Calendar Girls*, which opens on June 21. The delightful musical-comedy is adapted from the hit 2003 film of the same name. The evening begins with hearty appetizers and wine, with desserts and coffee at intermission. All proceeds will benefit the Grace Hudson Museum. More information to follow.



Readings from *Dear Human at the Edge of Time* will be featured at the Writers Read event on March 28.



James Krenov: Leave Fingerprints, by Brendan Gaffney, the speaker at our virtual program on April 18th.

Thinning the Sedge

Recently, the Wild Gardens was fortunate to get some help from the California Conservation Corp (CCC). Four CCC members volunteered for two days to thin out the main sedge bed. White root sedge, *Carex barbarae*, is an important plant used in Pomo basket making. When harvested, their long white rhizomes are stripped, split, cured, and then used as the sewing strand in coiled baskets. Rhizomes are the



The main sedge bed after the thinning.

shallow roots that the plant sends out horizontally to create more plants, similar to the growth of strawberries.

Sedge likes to grow in riparian areas, although it is very drought tolerant once established. Our sedge beds had become so overgrown that the rhizomes were tending to spiral, rather than create a nice long, straight root that is optimal for basketry. The CCC members dug out underground root tangles, incorporated sand into the soil, and then mulched the

soil with more sand to create an environment that we hope will be conducive to promoting nice long rhizomes for future harvests. Although the area looks somewhat barren right now, it will soon fill up with more sedge plants.

— Andrea Davis, *Wild Gardens Manager*

Recent Contributions

Nancy Baltins, for *Sun House Care & Collections Conservation*

California Garden & Landscape Society, for *The Wild Gardens*

Guilford & Gudrun Dye

Alfred C. Harrison Jr.

Howie Hawkes & Mary Ann Landis, for *Education Outreach, in memory of Doug Browe*

Monte & Kay Hill, in memory of *Marge Boynton*

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Janet King, for *Acquisitions Fund*

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Jane & Nelson Weller, for *Acquisitions Fund, Exhibitions & Programs, Education Outreach, & General Operations*



CCC volunteers: Chloe, Phillipe, Orlando, Teagan.

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Jessica Nussbaum

Janet & Charles Orth

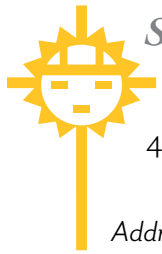
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Sun House Guild

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thinking about how what the school teaches could apply to me.

Over a full year, the school's coursework requires six days a week in the workshop, but provides students the time to slow down, to pay attention, to be thoughtful. Curators of exhibitions don't often have that kind of time, but it is a good reminder to slow down. The school advocates for high quality craftsmanship but, from the many people I've interviewed and spoken with, perfection isn't necessarily the goal. A good craftsperson knows they will make mistakes and work creatively to solve them. Krenov himself knew it was impossible to avoid errors and so accumulated them in places where they would be least noticeable. Something made "perfectly" might be sterile and lack feeling.

And so in the end, I will strive for my very best, and the exhibition will be well-made with help from our staff here; Denver Tuttle, our superb preparator; our advisory committee; and all those who submitted their work or shared their oral histories. Be assured, this exhibition will show all of our fingerprints.

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:

Anonymous

Linda Corwin Burris

Thomas Denio & Laura McKee

Rick & Pam Lewis

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Jane & Nelson Weller