

**“Bohemian Blues & Wild Hearts”**  
**Shows New Frontiers for Individuals to Explore**  
**Exhibit Essay**  
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**Introduction**

“Bohemian Blues & Wild Hearts” celebrates art and the joy of decorating while looking at the role home, culture and community play in our art and decorating choices. While home has historically been seen as the best place for our self-expression, changes in how we shop for art and decoration objects has made it less about being an individual and more about displaying the trophies of a capitalistic contest which offers not the winners of a cultural wellspring of affection; instead, consumers are allowed to select objects chosen by a select few buyers at the major stores of our day who choose based on profit margins. This capitalist subversion of commodification does not positively inform our cultural work places or community gathering spaces much less our homes; instead, it drives each person toward being similar. For example, many homes have a cow picture made from an actual artist’s painting but now mass produced in a low quality, high VOC manner which steals our chances of learning more about who we are, what our purpose is, and our chance for having fun with our choices. If we all choose to purchase items that are meaningful to us, remind us of certain moments or items that just bring us joy we’ll find buying real art made by real artists that is not mass-produced for-profit-margins is one way to recreate our lives into everything we want them to be.

“Bohemian Blues & Wild Hearts” offers original artworks and some carefully selected prints to welcome joy onto our walls and lives. We suggest creating a “Wild Heart Wall” in your home or office, shed or garage where faces can be placed next to artworks that speak of our own personal definition of “Wild Heart”. Even though this exhibit may work with symbols like hearts and metaphors of individualism, this art exhibit also looks at the role unconventionality plays in recent novel experiences we’ve shared with weather, viruses, economics and technology. Each individual can make a difference creating fertile fields for communities to balance more positively between change and stability. Democracy is more than a vote, it is also the support mechanism for each individual to choose how they want their life, environment and homes to look, how self-rule is a constant and can be examined in our daily lives through choosing intimate objects that speak to us as individuals not consumers.

## The Themes

“Bohemian Blues & Wild Hearts” is organized around three themes

- multiple inspirations
- ideas about individuality and
- living with a wild heart

The multiple inspirations are from jazz with “Bohemian Blues” a constant soundtrack and the 21st Century Bohemians who both build their worlds from scratch. More inspiration comes from an artist like Yves Klein who created his own color blue to express his vision of the human body. Another inspiration is the iconic blues artists choose for the Mother Mary, especially in manger scenes when her blue cloak glows against the reds and browns of others who have gathered there. And we’re inspired by Josef Albers’ book the Interaction of Color GG’s curators Michael Milewski and Vicki Milewski have designed each Blue exhibit to incorporate Albers’ ideas about how we see color, how placement affects perception of color and the emotional impact of certain colors. Albers wrote about the three main areas that GG curators explore:

- The relativity of color--how color can change depending on where it is placed in relation to other colors, shapes and light.
- The deception of color--how certain placements can change color perception.
- And Albers’ idea of how seeing is directed by our weltanschauung, German for “worldview”, which means that what we know, the culture we live in and how we look at things determines how we see color, how we see shapes, how we see art.

Albers not only experimented with the interaction between colors he also attempted to move each person out of their comfort zone and into a more global way of seeing simply by saying that each individual sees in their own way. GG curators are working on incorporating these ideas into their ground breaking art theory “Partnership of Sight” since understanding how our “worldview” can influence how we approach color influences how we see art and our experience with it.

The equally inspirational heart is also forefront in the curation of “Bohemian Blues & Wild Hearts”. This simple symbol of a wild heart asks us to be thoughtful, passionate and persevering. “Our wild heart moves through” i our lives and our communities since we become a part of all we’ve met.

“Always roaming with a hungry heart,  
Much have I seen and known;  
I am a part of all I have met;  
yet all experience is an arch where thro’  
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades  
For ever and forever when I move.”--From Ulysses by Alfred Lord Tennyson

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Bohemians follow their wild hearts without regret or justification.

## **Riffing on Individualism**

These inspirations lead to ideas about individuality by showing primarily blue artworks and how different each one is in their coloration, content and meaning just as we are all human yet each one of us is unique.

Individuality is a part of being American, of being alive. Even before coming to North America, Americans were out in the world moving toward new frontiers in land, in thought and in riches. “The frontier image represents an American attitude of optimism for the future. It distinguishes our dynamism from earlier established attitudes by allowing for understanding, growth, and change. Our ability as free individuals to question authority, with the courage and confidence to venture beyond the safe and familiar, is so much identified with the American experience that”<sup>ii</sup> it extends into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century utilizing the ideas of growth and change from a different perspective since the growth of today means exploring abstract frontiers in our minds and communities; and change means restoration of what we know works and yet have forgotten along the way. “Turner spoke of the progress stemming from individualism toward economic and political equality, and democracy.”<sup>iii</sup> this individualism came from the “free land” of 1800’s America which was not free at all since many people from many cultures died pursuing its virtue. This “free land” allowed for anyone who could claim it a chance to make a home, a business a purpose from their life and in those moments of wonderment of the first mornings on this new land these people fashioned the mythos of what America still means to countless many across the world.

We here in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century still stand upon the achievements derived from those first mornings and those frontier people who sought to work with the land and themselves as in a partnership. We look back at those days without a shred of decency to recognize the people who gave their lives for those first mornings and with a lack of understanding of what it meant to those people on those mornings. We can only ascribe what we might think, feel or believe when the sun rose out over land that was ours, land that could be brought into the clutches of civilization or remain as part of the frontier. We can disdain the work that has brought us here or we can see the mistakes and begin to right them as we move forward. It is the “Wild Hearts” in this exhibit which have to make these decisions, climbing to the highest hill we can find to see the sun rise before it crests the horizon line, when the stars are still hanging dutifully in the changing landscape of the skies and our eyes become accustomed to seeing them.

While individuals are also the stuff of communities like our wonderful jewelry artists who create one-of-a-kind pieces knowing the amuletic power of self-expression. Even though each artist material is a byproduct of marketing where status quo observers and economic talismans merge to produce certain blue hues, certain human centric shapes, even certain internet tested ideas. Before being combined to create certain artists’ works, each piece of the artwork is sourced by the artist often creating an algorithmic chain that will inform future searches for other artists, perhaps even tunneling down to the same selection. But to be sourced materials are chosen, often from nature in the selection of dye stuffs or stones, then the materials are redefined by processes we know little about today. The old-fashioned buffing, polishing and washing of stones for inclusion in jewelry is now more

intense with often non-natural colorations, luminosity upgrading, preservation glosses and more done to a stone because of perceived value enhancement.<sup>iv</sup> Think of the simple piece of blue lapis from where it is chiseled out of its strata then traveling to become a different kind of beauty in a pendant for your necklace.

Lately some of our jewelry artists have taken to working with raw stones instead of polished or faceted ones. “It brings me closer to the natural world and the power I always feel when I am in that world walking or simply sitting enjoying the day.” Dana Jeimatz explains why she chose to work almost exclusively this season with raw labrodite, “The natural shape of each stone and the beautiful luminosity shows me we don’t have to cut, polish or facet stones to share in their beauty. I could just feel the energy coming off each stone almost like it was happy to be part of my process in its natural state. I still love faceted stones, but the raw ones seem more honest like a simply drawn heart feels authentic.”

Just as artist Michael Milewski continues his cut out artworks this time taking inspiration from Jim Dine and his use of simple figures like hearts, so too the heart is a foundation for other ideas to emerge. “Basing my art on simple things allows me to remain rooted in the real while also using these simple things as foundations for building complicated ideas into my work. That way people can enjoy the idea of a heart—bringing to it their own interests and feelings—while I can also interleave broader concepts like abstracting 21st Century Suffrage, seeing Webb telescope images from a more human perspective or allowing my concern for the coming election to spill over into a joyous heart. Having had initiatory artistic development through my artist mother I agree with some of how she approached art—that others do not need the artist’s intent in order to enjoy art. We all bring ourselves to each artwork we encounter sometimes simply enjoying the shapes or colors as something we want in our lives.”

## **Conclusion**

As a visitor walks through the exhibit “Bohemian Blues & Wild Hearts” they may not immediately think about the curatorial themes present or even the title of the exhibit but they will see the color blue in all its wonderful hues and media. Taking a little time to read this exhibit essay or to spend some time thinking about a piece in the show which caught your curiosity is one way GG curators feel each visitor is partaking in the “Partnership of Sight”. As GG begins its 2024/2025 art season in Eau Claire with a new yearly theme of *Incipit vita nova* (A new life begins)<sup>v</sup> also known as the multi-year theme “Many Sides to It”, they know fun is what the goal is and all the other stuff is really just for fun.

## Many Sides to It

many sides to it as I can see  
the floor tilts then sighs  
to release me  
from gravity  
but the apple remains  
on the table,  
the receiving jar  
in the barn,  
the flag still flies  
in the field  
as the red roads start  
rapidly multiplying.

Now all I have to do  
is choose;  
or wish upon a red star  
up there  
in a universe  
of blue.  
--Vicki Milewski

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> From *Novel* by Arthur Rimbaud

<sup>ii</sup> From "A New Frontier in the Chicago Suburbs Settling Fermilab, 1963-1972". By Adrienne Kolb and Lillian Hoddeson a speech delivered in 1983.

<sup>iii</sup> Turner, Frederick Jackson, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," speech delivered in 1893, copyright 1920, reprinted in *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, edited by George Rogers Taylor, (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1956), 1-18.

<sup>iv</sup> We've been talking about the processes our artistic supplies go through for a few years but it took the exhibit *Material Acts: Experimentation in Architecture and Design* at Craft Contemporary, L.A. September 28, 2024 — January 5, 2025 to open this conversation toward looking at ideas like this phrase from their website: "the role of nature as a starting point for material experimentation" (from [https://www.craftcontemporary.org/exhibitions/materialacts/?mc\\_cid=0460634480&mc\\_eid=a957fc4f8c](https://www.craftcontemporary.org/exhibitions/materialacts/?mc_cid=0460634480&mc_eid=a957fc4f8c))

<sup>v</sup> Inspired by Delaine Le Bas' exhibit "Incipit Vita Nova. Here Begins The New Life/A New Life Is Beginning" at Secession, Vienna where her "transdisciplinary way: she combines visual, performative and literary practices to create an artistic oeuvre that encompasses all areas of life"—filled the lower level of at the Secession. Fall 2023