

**SCANDINAVIAN FOLK ARTS AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS  
IN THE UPPER MIDWEST**

**ARTIST FELLOWSHIPS  
2022/2023**

**BENDER, CAROL**  
**FROM—Wisconsin Rapids, WI**



Ms. Bender will travel to Sweden—namely, Dalarna, Värmland, Hälsingland, and Jämtland provinces— with Pamela Rucinski to research traditional furniture painting from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their research on Swedish painted vernacular furniture will build upon their prior study of Gubbrandsdal rosemålning for their two-year Wisconsin Arts Board Apprenticeship as well as their prior research on Bonads, Dalmåleri, and Drickamålning as 2018 Folk Artist Fellows with the American-Scandinavian Foundation. Upon their return, they plan to continue disseminating their knowledge of Swedish folk art painting with interested groups in the Swedish Vasa Order of America, the Sons of Norway, and other cultural centers, fairs, and heritage camps.

**BLOOMQUIST, PIEPER**  
**FROM—Grand Forks, ND**



Ms. Bloomquist will travel to Unnaryds Bonadsmuseum in Sweden, where she will participate in educational workshops, field trips, and an international conference on bonadsmålning. During her month-long stay, she will also create a painting on-site for display at the museum and instruct the museum's folk school in the use of traditional animal glue paint called "limfärg." Upon her return, Ms. Bloomquist intends to share her knowledge of bonadsmålning in workshops, public presentations, lectures, instructional classes, and community projects. Ms. Bloomquist was a North Dakota Individual Artist Fellow in 2021 and a Folk Artist Fellow with the American-Scandinavian Foundation in 2018. She is currently a Master artist in the North Dakota Council on the Arts Traditional Folk Arts Grant program and a regular instructor at the American Swedish Institute and North House Folk School.

**KEOBOUNPHENG, TIA**  
**FROM—Minneapolis, MN**



Ms. Keobounpheng will travel to Vaasa, Finland, to work with master himmelist, Eija Koski. Himmeli are traditional Finnish holiday decorations made from strung-together straw that is then tied into elaborate geometric sculptures and hung from ceilings above dining tables from Christmas to Midsummer. While working with Eija Koski, Ms. Keobounpheng intends to gain a deeper understanding of the history and traditional process of crafting himmeli from rye harvests. After returning to Minneapolis, Ms. Keobounpheng will explore local sourcing options for rye stalks that she can later harvest and craft into himmeli.

To help disseminate this folk tradition, Ms. Keoboungpheng will create a tutorial on himmeli making and teach himmeli classes with arts and cultural institutions in her local area.

**NOVOTNY, CHRISTINE**  
**FROM—Grand Marais, MN**



Ms. Novotny will travel to Stockholm, Sweden, where she will study Röllakan style rugs with Swedish master rug weaver Ulla Parkdal. Röllakan is a Swedish tapestry technique which uses geometric and organic patterning to make tapestry style rugs. While in Sweden, Ms. Novotny will also observe how the weaving industry continues to operate despite ongoing industrial textile production. In 2020, Ms. Novotny completed a residency in handweaving with North House Folk School, and in 2022, she was awarded an Arrowhead Regional Arts Council Artist grant. Upon her return to Minnesota, Ms. Novotny intends to incorporate röllakan weaving within her own work as a floor loom weaver and teach röllakan technique at folk

arts schools in the Upper Midwest, which will include North House Folk School and Vesterheim Folk Art School.

**PRADT, SARAH**  
**FROM—Saint Paul, MN**



A teacher of Hardanger-fiddle playing (*hardingfele* in Norwegian) at St. Olaf College and a member of the Twin Cities Hardingfelelag (TCHFL) in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Professor Pradt will meet with hardingfele ensembles in Norway (namely Viken, Telemark, and Vestland) that continue the tradition of playing for a collective dancing group. Vis-à-vis her interactions

with these Norwegian ensembles, Professor Pradt will study regional variations in the use of bowing and thematic variations within the dance group, the employment of multiple voices in the ensemble, and the dynamics of acculturating new members into the dancing group. Her project, entitled “Hardanger Fiddle Ensembles: Growing, Sustaining, and Playing for Dance,” will culminate in multiple opportunities for sharing and teaching the Hardanger fiddle art form with her community of local fiddlers, ensembles, and St. Olaf College fiddle students.

**RUCINSKI, PAMELA**  
**FROM—Oshkosh, WI**



Please see project description for Carol Bender.

**SERSLAND, CAROL**  
**FROM—Minneapolis, MN**

Building upon a family legacy of Norwegian folk dancing and a lifelong cultivation of folk dance and songs of Telemark, Norway, Ms. Sersland is interested in expanding otherwise dwindling communities of folk dancers in the Upper Midwest. For her project, she will travel to Norway to study how Norwegian participation in Nordic dance has been increasing over the years. While there, she will attend music and dance workshops by Seljord Folk Music Group, Vinje Culture School, and Gransherad Fiddle and Dance Group that specifically target young participants. In particular, she is interested in the instructors' approaches, techniques, and group leaders' notes on what dance means to the participants. With this information, Ms. Sersland would like to formulate ways to apply these Norwegian recruitment methods and outreach strategies to folk dance groups in the Upper Midwest to help amplify and preserve this folk tradition for all generations.

**WIITALA, LISA**  
**FROM—Hancock, MI**



Ms. Wiitala will travel to Finland to work with master ryijy weaver Suvi Kankkonen. Ryijy is a textile made by knotting together bundles of yarn along warp strings that essentially produces a shaggy pile rug or wall hanging. Ms. Wiitala learned to weave using her grandmother's carpet loom and was introduced to ryijy and soumak weaving methods due to interest in using recycled materials from her grandmother's belongings. In this way, Ms. Wiitala likes to think of her weaving as bringing together the past and present, her Finnish heritage and her American upbringing in Hancock. Apart from studying under Suvi Kankkonen, Ms. Wiitala will also visit The Craft Museum of Finland, the Finnish National Gallery, and Friends of Finnish Handcraft, among others, to study traditional and contemporary Finnish textile designs. Upon her return, Ms. Wiitala plans to teach a workshop through the Finnish American Folk School alongside additional teaching and community events.

**2022/2023 Award total: 8 Awards**