



Anne Labovitz

# 122 Conversations

## Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders

By Kat Lyzun

In American artist Anne Labovitz's exhibition, *122 Conversations*, vibrantly colored paintings evoke the human spirit with layers of names, words, and faces as the artist interprets conversations she had with people in six different countries. Each painting is unique yet interconnected, much like we are as people. "(The idea) is that we're an individual, but also part of something whole. Peace, for example, was something that was universally common—said in different words, but the same concept," Labovitz says.

*122 Conversations* is focused on the culture and people of Duluth and its Sister Cities: Thunder Bay, Rania (Iraqi Kurdistan), Petrozavodsk (Russia), Ohara Isumi-City (Japan), and Växjö (Sweden). Labovitz spoke with at least 10 people in each city, either in person or via Skype. She then created six large pieces based on her interpretation of those conversations woven with cultural elements unique to each place. She cut each painting into four

so that when reassembled, each gallery can arrange them however they like. "I endeavored to honour the person I was talking to, almost meditate on them as a person," she says. "The paintings are intentionally not whole. They are intended to be connected to something else."

She spoke with a variety of different people, all selected by each city—teens, soldiers, artists, political activists, police officers and mayors. Here in Thunder Bay, she says she was particularly moved by her conversation with Mayor Keith Hobbs, and it features prominently in her painting.

While the exhibition, which launched September 10 at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, marks the culmination of nearly four years of work, Labovitz sees this new phase as almost a new start. The exhibit will travel to each of the Sister Cities until 2017, and in each city she hopes people will visit, explore, and add their own names, thoughts or drawings to

mini-paintings that will then be compiled and added to the travelling show. "I like the idea of 'I touched it, you touched it, they touched it—everyone touched it,'" she says. "This is a warm invitation to the people of Thunder Bay to come and tell your story."

The project is led by Labovitz and organized by the Tweed Museum of Art in Duluth in collaboration with Duluth Sister Cities International and the University of Minnesota Duluth's School of Fine Arts. It runs in Thunder Bay until October 18, 2015.

*A native of Duluth, Anne Labovitz currently lives and works in St. Paul, MN. Her paintings are part of the permanent collections at the Tweed Museum of Art in Duluth, MN, as well as galleries in California and Bosnia-Herzegovina. She would love you to share your thoughts on the show on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with #122conversations.*



Vaxjo, Sweden



Thunder Bay



Iraqi Kurdistan