

# Radio Gallery: Anne Labovitz

By MAIJA JENSON · MAR 27, 2018

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*"122 Conversations" in Ohara Isumi City, Japan*

CREDIT ANNE LABOVITZ

Anne Labovitz has continued to share updates about her artistic saga that is "122 Conversations." We look forward to the final exhibition coming to Duluth in the Fall of 2018, on view Sept 25 - Dec 31 at the Tweed Museum of Art in at UMD in Duluth. The project celebrates the combined 122 years of relationships with Duluth's five sister cities international.

"...Just as exciting, is the discovery of the pieces that are missing from the suitcase and have remained in their host country. Both Rania and Växjö have acquired diptychs which will be displayed as symbols of their relationships with Duluth. The two most recent returned suitcases from Petrozavodsk and Ohara Isumi-City have similar vacancies! Two diptychs, measuring 66 in by 30 feet will remain in each of these countries. A Japanese collector has purchased one of the site specific diptychs and the city of Petrozavodsk has acquired one for their city. I am very excited that scrolls from 122 Conversations will remain in these cities!"

~Anne Labovitz

Labovitz's exhibit has visited all of Duluth's Sister Cities International: [Rania](#), Iraqi Kurdistan, [Växjö](#), Sweden, [Petrozavodsk](#), Russia, [Thunder Bay](#), Canada and [Ohara-Isumi City](#), Japan.

<http://kumd.org/post/radio-gallery-anne-labovitz#stream/0>

# いすみ市国際交流協会つうしん

Isumi International Exchange Association

編集発行：いすみ市国際交流協会

ダルス市出身の画家、  
アン・ラボヴィッツさんの作品「122の会話」が、  
いすみ市役所の玄関ロビーに飾られ、  
市役所を訪れる市民の目を1ヶ月間楽しませてくれました。  
縦10メートルもあるこの巨大な作品は、  
ダルス市が姉妹都市提携をしている  
世界五ヶ国の都市のイメージを表現したもので、  
2015年から各都市を巡回し展覧会が開かれて来ました。  
そして最後にいすみ市で、  
昨年11月のダルス市訪問団の来訪に合わせて展示をし、  
姉妹都市交流に彩りを添えることとなりました。

# いすみ市内中学生姉妹都市交流【ウ

いすみ市の湊中学校と国吉中学校の生徒は毎年 Wisconsin 州ウォバンの中・高校生と、また大原中学校の生徒は隔年でミ



甲冑体験

日本文化体験

国吉中学校訪問

小学校訪問



野外パーティー

ハイキング

## 【ウォバン市の中学生いすみ市訪問】5月8日～5月14日

ウォバン市の中学生16名と引率者4名が、いすみ市を訪問しました。湊中学校と国吉中学校両校を訪問し、学習に参加したり交流行事に参加したりと親睦を深めました。そして、2グループに分かれて岬地区4小学校を訪問して児童たちとゲームなどをして楽しみました。また、日本文化に触れる機会があり、習字や折り紙、甲冑体験など興味深げに取組む姿が見られました。ウォバン中学校の生徒のみなさんは、日本の学校や文化に触れ、有意義な時間を過ごして帰国の途に就きました。協会でも、通訳ボランティアを務めたり、歓迎パーティーに出席したりしています。

## 【大原中学校の生徒ダール

大原中学校の生徒12名と引率職員1名で、昨年いすみ市を訪れたダールズ市ではアメリカでの家庭生活を体験し野外パーティー、野球観戦などを楽しみました。うまく言葉が伝わるか心配とができました。平和の鐘が縁で結、自分を見つめたり日本の生活を見つめ

2018 SPRING NO.28

## Peace Bell

### 平和の鐘つきイベント開催

9月21日の国際平和デーに合わせて、平和の鐘つきイベントが行われました。参加者全員で、平和への願いを込めて鐘を撞いた後、ミサイルをイメージした黒い塊を、子供たちが作ったちぎり絵の端で覆い隠してしまうというアート作品を完成させました。



ダールズ市にある平和の鐘は、いすみ市との姉妹都市交流のシンボルとして親しまれています。1990年に提携の記念として贈った初代の鐘は、数年後に損傷が進み2001年に二代目に産をゆずり、倉庫にしまわれたままでした。その鐘が2017年12月に、ダールズ市の交流協会やロータリークラブの皆さんの協力で再び表舞台に登場することになりました。ダールズ市中心にある、DECCホールに、当時の式典で使われた立派なカートに乗せられて、いすみ市との友好の歴史を市民のみなさんに伝えています。

# パン市・ダルース市】(アメリカ合衆国)

州ダルースの中学生と相互訪問しています。いすみ市国際交流協会は、これらの交流事業をさまざまな面で支援しています。



Husky Baseball 観戦



ビーチボール



ホームステイ先の庭でトランボリン



ホームステイ先での食事風景



小学校での交流



ウォバン中学校

## 訪問】8月5日～8月13日

ダルース市を訪問しました。夏季休業中な学生やホームステイ先の子ども達と夏なら広大な敷地でのキャンプやハイキング、た。ダルース市は海がない分、湖で夏を楽しめるように、お互いに自然と打ち解けるこの事業では、ダルース市の生活を知ると共に、機会となりました。

## 【岬中学校・国吉中学校の生徒ウォバン市訪問】9月22日～9月30日

岬中学校・国吉中学校の生徒16名と引率職員2名が、ウォバン市を訪問しました。ホームステイをとおして、アメリカの生活を体験し、市内の小・中学校で日本文化を紹介したり交流したりすることが大きな目的でした。ウォバン市の小・中学校では、全校集会や授業・歓迎セレモニーに参加しました。また、ウォバン市の皆さんが、優しく親切に接してくれたので、とても充実した訪問になりました。英語でのコミュニケーションは、聞くことより話す方が難しいことを実感しました。英語への興味が高まると共に、自分の言葉で伝えるよう努力したいという思いを強くする機会となりました。

ISUMI INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ASSOCIATION H30.3

## Art Bridge

### アート作品作り

ダルース訪問団の皆さんが、岬中学校の生徒達やいすみ市の子ども達と一緒にアート作品を作りました。ダルースの皆さんは風作りに挑戦！最後は子ども達と一緒に遊んで楽しみました。





Photo by Coastline Institute  
KOBAYASHI

## Sister City Delegation 米ダールズ市訪問団を歓迎

米国ミネソタ州ダールズ市から姉妹都市交流の公式訪問団 11名が、2017年10月31日から11月7日までの1週間、いすみ市を訪れました。

市内のホストファミリー宅に宿泊し、いすみ市長室への表敬訪問、市内視察（平和の鐘、湧きなど）、県内観光、都内観光、交流パーティーなどの日程に加え、いすみ国際交流協会が中心となって企画した風、つるし籠作りなどの体験イベントやバーベキュー、カラオケパーティー、楽しみなどして、姉妹都市の友好親善をさらに深めました。

訪問団の団長を務めたコレシユ・ラカンさんは「いすみ市民のみなさまの温かいおもてなし、ダールズ市民を代表して心から感謝します。私たちは両都市の友好関係がこれからも長く続くことを確信しています」と述べられました。



Photo by Coastline Institute  
KOBAYASHI

ISUMI INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ASSOCIATION H30

## 英会話教室開講

大原文化センターにおいて、市内在住外国人講師による英会話教室を開講しました。（1月～3月計6回）回を追うごとに受講生同士も打ち解け、和気あいあいの雰囲気の中、英会話を楽しみました。

次年度も開催予定ですので、皆様のご参加をお待ちしています。募集案内は広報いすみに掲載予定です。

## 会員・通訳・ホストファミリーを募集

いすみ市国際交流協会では、会員を募集しています。様々な分野において積極的な国際交流事業を進めるには、多くの方々のご理解とご協力が必要です。一人でも多くの方のご入会をお願いいたします。

年会費：個人 3,000円 中学生：1,000円 法人：10,000円

**通訳ボランティア募集** 協会主催の行事や訪問団受入時などにおける通訳や翻訳のできる方を募集しています。

**ホストファミリー募集** 姉妹都市から訪問された方を、受け入れてくださるご家族を募集しています。

**お申込・問合せ** いすみ市国際交流協会事務局（いすみ市教育委員会 学校教育課内）  
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☎キャリアメール

いすみ市国際交流協会 入会申込書

## ハロウィン

大原商店街で予定されていたハロウィンイベントは、台風のため残念ながら中止になりましたが、旧ハイマートの場所をお借りして、子供達と一緒にダンスパーティーが行われました。台風も吹き飛びそうな怖～いお化けが集まりました。



## 本協会の活動に協賛いただいている 事業所をご紹介します

以下の事業所のみならずには、本協会へのご理解とご協力をいただいております。感謝申し上げます。（五十音順・敬称略）

- (株)アスカ大原店 (株)市原工務店 (株)エナザ・インターナショナル 御宿土地 (株)木戸泉酒店 (株)クリバヤシ印刷 (株)慶興建設
- 京葉銀行大原支店 (有)サンキュー印刷 荘司建設(有) (株)新潟ハイ
- (株)鈴木種彦 総合設備(株) (有)外房サービス・平建設(株)
- (有)田中建築店 千葉銀行大原支店 千葉興業銀行大原支店
- 千葉ウクレレ(株) 緑子伊田倉庫大原支店 (株)出口商店 (株)中野



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# Art Beyond Borders



September 17, 2018

Lori C. Melton

**An artistic odyssey ends with “122 Conversations.” The show opens September 25.**

Artist [Anne Labovitz](#) will host a news conference at the Tweed Museum of Art on Tuesday, September 25, 2018 at 10 a.m. The Tweed Museum is on UMD’s campus, 1201 Ordean Court.

Labovitz is introducing her exhibit [“122 Conversations: Person to Person/Art Beyond Borders.”](#) Duluth Mayor Emily Larson, Duluth Sister Cities International’s Koresh Lakhan, and UMD Chancellor Lendley (Lynn) Black are scheduled to join her.

### About the Exhibition



“122 Conversations: Person to Person/Art Beyond Borders” is the final stop in a six-venue, worldwide tour that was organized through Duluth’s International Sister Cities network. The tour included exhibits in Canada, Sweden, Russia, Iraq and Japan.

The Tweed exhibition concludes the tour and includes 100 objects.

Labovitz envisioned a multi-city, multi-year interpersonal project with Duluth Sister Cities as a catalyst for positive social change. The exhibition is the culmination of a six-year initiative by the Duluth-born, Twin Cities-based artist to unite countries, cultures and communities.

The show is the end result of interviews, paintings and creativity. “I transformed conversation into powerful artworks. The words of the many Skype conversations with Sister Cities participants were inscribed layer over layer and became embedded as the foundation and narrative content of the show,” says Labovitz.

The artist simultaneously engaged and documented her conversations with the participants, becoming ever more fascinated with the impact on the individual and the collective narratives. “The experience of finding ways to relate and sharing that experience with a stranger revealed a fundamental of human nature: interdependence can bridge distances,” she explains.

“Most visitors will immediately notice that the paintings are vivid, lush with color and intense brushstrokes,” says Tweed Museum of Art Director Ken Bloom. “Labovitz uses painting and overlapping elements to represent emotion, connection, people and experience.”

Labovitz says that some colors reflect her intuitive response to the interview, while others are chosen with consideration of more formal elements of composition and contrasting tone.

The show opens to the public on September 25, 2018 and runs through January 6, 2019.

There will be an opening reception on Thursday, October 25, 2018 from 6 - 8:30 p.m.



["122 Conversations" press kit](#)

## Tags

[News Release](#)

[Tweed Museum of Art](#)

[School of Fine Arts](#)

[SFA](#)

# Duluth-Born Artist Unveils “122 Conversations” Exhibit

The exhibition is at the museum on the University of Minnesota Duluth campus, but it's a resource for students and the entire Twin Ports.

September 25, 2018

[Haydee Clotter](#)



DULUTH, Minn. – One of the missions at the Tweed Museum of Art is to bring art and people in the community together.

A new collection hopes to bring that connection to Duluth.

It's called *122 Conversations: Person to Person/Art Beyond Borders* and was created by Duluth-born artist Anne Labovitz.

Over the course of two years Labovitz conducted interviews with artists, writers and musicians from five Duluth sister cities around the world.

The journey took her to Thunder Bay, Canada; Rania, Iraqi Kurdistan; Vaxjo, Sweden, Petrozavodsk, Russia; and Ohara Isumi-City.

Her goal was to create a cross country dialogue.

“The work that you’ll see in the exhibition, the scrolls are an archive, a memory, record keeping honoring their lives,” said Labovitz. “The pieces are not intended to be legible. It’s really more of an expression of those conversations.”

The exhibition is at the museum on the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) campus but it’s a resource for students and the entire Twin Ports.

UMD Chancellor Lendley Black says *122 Conversations: Person to Person/Art Beyond Borders* will explore the idea of conversation within the works so it can be discussed with others.

“Through this exhibit, you the viewer also become part of the conversation as you engage with the pieces of art and respond to each of them,” said Black. “I encourage you all to be an active participant with these art pieces and find your own true connections.”

The exhibit is on display at Tweed Museum of Art until Jan. 6.

Categories: [Community](#), [Minnesota](#), [News](#), [News – Latest News](#)

Tags: [122 Conversations: Person to Person/Art Beyond Borders](#), [Anne Labovitz](#), [Tweed Museum of Art](#)

# Art Hounds: Capturing cultural conversations in art

Arts & Culture [Marianne Combs](#) · Oct 25, 2018



Anne Labovitz's "122 Conversations" explores Duluth's relationship with its sister cities. *Courtesy of David Sherman*

## [LISTEN](#)

Art Professor Annie Dugan is going to the opening of Anne Labovitz's new show "[122 Conversations](#)" at the Tweed Art Museum in Duluth. Labovitz was interested in Duluth's relationships with its sister cities, and how those relationships are forged one person at a time. Labovitz interviewed people in each of the cities and used her conversations as the basis for a series of artworks that combine color and text to depict the dense layers of relationship. "122 Conversations" runs through Jan. 6, 2019.

Theater-maker Andrew Troth plans to see "[All the Great Books \(Abridged\)](#)" at Camp Bar in St. Paul. Created by the same people behind "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare

(Abridged)," this show widens its gaze to the grand masterworks of English literature. Troth says you don't have to be that well-read to appreciate the show's sense of humor or its deft barbs at contemporary culture. Shows run through Nov. 24.

Playwright and performer Matt Kessen thinks you should check out "[The Legend of Sleepy Hollow](#)" at the Twin Cities Horror Festival. Kessen says it's a new adaptation of the literary classic featuring original music and choreography. Plus, he says, it's a show that will appeal to all ages. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow runs Oct. 27 — Nov. 4; the Twin Cities' Horror Festival begins Thursday night at the Southern Theater in Minneapolis.

## UMD showcases 'Art Beyond Borders' exhibition



**CBS 3 Duluth**  
October 25, 2018

A local artist is helping Duluth connect with communities across the country. Over the last six years, [Anne Labovitz](#) held dozens of conversations with leaders from Duluth's Sister Cities, and now she's depicting those talks through art!

At UMD tomorrow, you have a special opportunity to check it all out:

Watch video [HERE](#).

## New Art Exhibit Opening at UMD

Created: October 25, 2018 10:49 AM

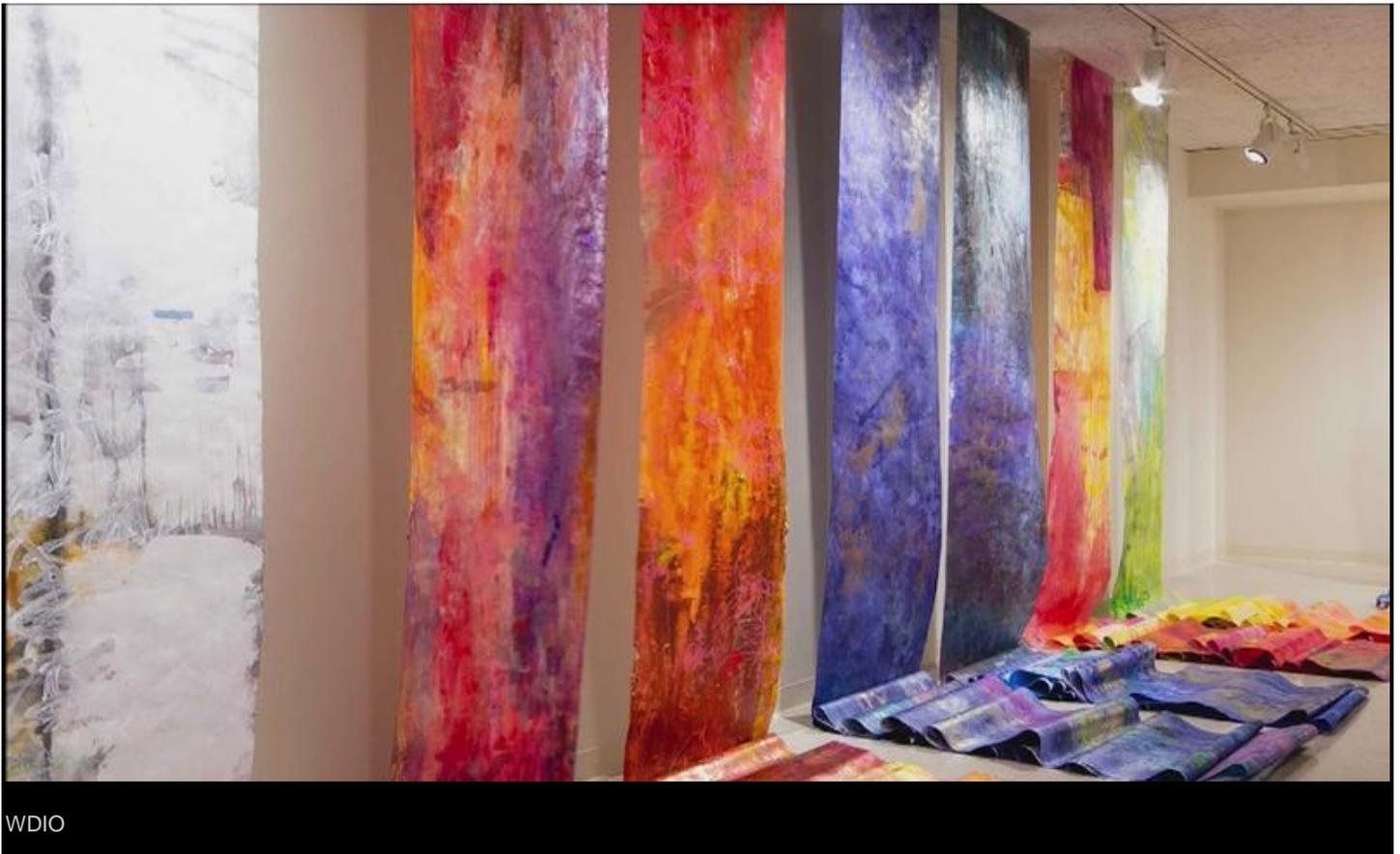


Watch interview [HERE](#).

An exhibit called "122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders," is now at the Tweed Museum at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

The artist, Anne Labovitz, started working on it six years ago and has traveled all over the world to complete it.

"I interviewed 60 people, 10 humans in each of the six sister cities, including Duluth," Labovitz said. "That's Rania, Kurdistan Iraq, Japan, Russia, Sweden, and Canada."



After she did the interviews, she listened back to them.

"I thought about our shared humanity and the questions that I asked each of the participants and created works, 60 long scrolls that are 35 feet long that really archive visually through mark-making and color those conversations," Labovitz said.

Labovitz said she was inspired by her interest in human beings. She wanted to bring people together through art and see one person at a time while creating opportunities for others to do the same.

"I've learned the urgency of our shared vulnerability and our shared compassion for one another," Labovitz said. "And a tremendous amount of respect for each of the people that I interviewed, each 60 person I fell in love with, and I think just the urgency of our time calls on us to really acknowledge and embrace our shared humanity."

This event is the culmination of all of her work. She said it means bringing together all the voices and 3500 volunteers helped make it possible.

"It's time for celebration, reflection, and gratitude," Labovitz said.

People who visit can also participate by writing their own stories on a square of paper and becoming a part of the exhibit.

"When you make that action here in Duluth, you realize you're doing the same thing that happened in the five other countries and it's like some of those notes that people have brought to us from other countries are like love notes, so it's time for Duluth to participate," Labovitz said.

The exhibit goes until January 6th. The opening reception is Thursday from 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m. at the Tweed Museum of Art.

# Tweed Museum to Host Grand Opening of "122 Conversations" Exhibition

Artist Anne Labovitz Set to Officially Unveil "122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders" Thursday, October 25

October 23, 2018

[Brett Scott](#)

DULUTH, Minn. – 122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders is a multi-city participatory exhibition by Anne Labovitz, whose endeavor is to be a catalyst for positive social change through this community-building project.

Labovitz's exhibition will be officially unveiled Thursday, October 25 from 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. at the Tweed Museum of Art on the campus of UMD.

Mayor Emily Larson will attend the opening to speak, along with the artist, and members of the Duluth Sister Cities International who traveled with the exhibition.

The event is free and open to the public.

The exhibition is a six-year initiative between Anne Labovitz, Twin Cities-based and Duluth native artist, Duluth Sister Cities International communities in Thunder Bay, Canada; Rania, Iraqi Kurdistan; Växjö, Sweden; Petrozavodsk, Russia; and Ohara Isumi-City, Japan, and the Tweed Museum of Art.

The exhibition toured from one city to the next between 2015 and 2017.

Since September, the exhibition concluded its tour and is currently on view at the Tweed Museum of Art where 100 of objects are on display.

The exhibition illustrates the works from the project, including Labovitz's paintings, participatory artworks from each venue, photographs, video, and documentation.

The video documents the 60 Skype, or in-person, interviews with mayors and residents from our Sister Cities.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Labovitz and the project.

Categories: [Community](#), [Education](#), [Links](#), [Minnesota](#), [News](#), [News – Latest News](#)

Tags: [122 Conversations: Person to Person/Art Beyond Borders](#), [Anne Labovitz](#), [art](#), [Artistic](#), [Brett Scott](#), [community](#), [Conversation](#), [duluth](#), [Global](#), [Tweed Museum](#), [University of Minnesota Duluth](#)

# Best Bets: Aby Wolf, opera opener and Sister Cities

By [Christa Lawler](#) on Oct 25, 2018 at 5:00 a.m.



Aby Wolf performs at both Bent Paddle and Sacred Heart Music Center this week. Photo by Aaron Rice.

## Aby Wolf plays Bent Paddle, Sacred Heart

Aby Wolf, a Twin Cities-based singer-songwriter, will perform twice here this week — first a solo show at Bent Paddle, then with Champagne Confetti, which is billed as new electro-acoustic works for strings, voices and electronics alongside Eric Mayson, at Sacred Heart Music Center.

Aby Wolf, often heard harmonizing with Dessa, has also collaborated with Martin Dosh, The New Standards, Dark Dark Dark and No Bird Sing and other members of Doomtree.

Champagne Confetti debuted last week in Minneapolis.

Aby Wolf plays a pop-up performance at 8-9 p.m. Oct. 25 at Bent Paddle Taproom, 1832 W. Michigan St. Tickets: Free.

Aby Wolf: Champagne Confetti is at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 26 at Sacred Heart Music Center, 201 W. Fourth St. Tickets: \$10 adults, \$7 students at [Globe News](#), [Electric Fetus](#) and [eventbrite.com](#).

## LOON opens with couple troubles

Lyric Opera of the North opens its season with a celebration of U.S.-born conductor, composer and teacher Leonard Bernstein — on the centennial of his birth.

A two-fer performance includes Bernstein's "Trouble in Tahiti," a one-act, one-day opera about a rocky suburban marriage that looks pretty good from the outside, and "The Filthy Habit" by Hilliard and Boresi. This short opera, by the duo behind "Blue Viola," is about a couple that is trying to quit smoking.

Both are less than 50 minutes long and sung in English. Composers Matt Boresi and Peter Hilliard will be at Monday's performance and will be part of a Q&A with guest conductor Andrew Sewell and cast members.

Lyric Opera of the North's season opener is at 4 p.m. Oct. 28 and 7 p.m. Oct. 29 and Oct. 30 at Clyde Iron Works, 2920 W. Michigan St. Tickets: \$50 reserved seat at tables, \$39 general seating, \$12 students with current ID.

## Award-winning violinist to perform during DSSO's 'New Horizons'



*Yevgeny Kutik (submitted photo)*

Award-winning Russian-American violinist Yevgeny Kutik will perform Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3 with the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra on Saturday at Symphony Hall. The New York Times has described the young artist as having a "dark hued tone and razor-sharp technique."

This is Kutik's favorite violin concerto, according to a news release, because it marks a sudden growth in the the composer's understanding of the instrument.

Also on Saturday's program: Arnold Schonberg's "Transfigured Night" and Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 8.

Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra's "New Horizons" concert is at 7 p.m. Oct. 27 at Symphony Hall. Tickets: (218) 623-3776 or at Ticketmaster outlets, including the DECC box office or ticketmaster.com.

## Talking about the Sister Cities



*Anne Labovitz's "122 Conversations" (Submitted photo)*

Six years later, artist Anne Labovitz's grand-scale project, involving Duluth's Sister Cities, is now showing at the Tweed Museum of Art. The work, "122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders" started with Labovitz conducting Skype interviews with people around the world. She then created large-scale paintings that captured the conversations. She has toured the works to the featured cities of Rania in Iraqi Kurdistan; Vaxjo, Sweden; Petrozavodsk, Russia; Thunder Bay, Canada; and Ohara Isumi-City, Japan. She also incorporated an interactive aspect.

Labovitz is a Duluth-born artist who now lives in the Twin Cities.

"122 Conversations" opening reception is 6-8:30 p.m. today (Oct. 25) at Tweed Museum of Art at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Free, open to the public.

## Arts walk, ballet talk



*Downtown Arts Walk (Submitted photo)*

Laura Goodman, whose "Curl, Uncurl and ..." is one of the commissioned works for the ballet's season-opening "Rite of Spring and Other Dances," will face off with painter Karen Nease for an arty convo at Joseph Nease Gallery.

Goodman based her choreography on four wave paintings by Nease and, according to a news release, explored "the elemental and generative forces" depicted in the artist's work.

Goodman is a former dancer and instructor who started her career with the Minnesota Ballet before moving on to the City Ballet of San Diego, Canyon Concert Ballet and the Metropolitan Ballet. Nease's work is inspired by environmental issues.

The artist talk is at 6 p.m. Friday at the Joseph Nease Gallery (23 W. First St.) is part of this month's Downtown Arts Walk, which is a drop-in wander past the studios, galleries, businesses and shops of local arts-minded folks.

Downtown Arts Walk is 5-8 p.m. Oct. 26 at downtown Duluth venues. See Facebook page for full list. Free, open to the public.



BLOG

## Artcetera

# Minnesota artist Anne Labovitz turns international communication into global artwork

By Alicia Eler

DECEMBER 7, 2018 — 7:09PM  
TEXT SIZE



*Above: A sampling of Labovitz's scrolls, created in collaboration with people from five cities around the world. All photos by Alicia Eler.*

Duluth-born, Twin Cities-based artist [Anne Labovitz](#) isn't detoured by borders or language barriers. Rather, she's thrilled about them.

For her current exhibition "[122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders](#)," on view at the Tweed Museum of Art in Duluth through Jan 6, 2019, she showcases her love of connection by creating large-scale scrolls that she created through conversations with people around the world. She took to Skype and good old-fashioned face-to-face conversations to learn about people from Duluth's five sister cities — Petrozavodsk, Russia; Rania, Iraqi Kurdistan; Växjö, Sweden; Thunder Bay, Canada; and Ohara Isumi-City, Japan — and then transformed those collaborations into long, flowing scrolls that can be hung from walls.

For Labovitz, it doesn't necessarily matter if she met the person or not — it is more about the connection they made through conversation, and the art that she generated from that. Previous to this work, Labovitz was creating portraits using woodcut with acrylic and pastel on canvas. We sat down face-to-face in her St. Paul studio to talk about how she got into this project.

**Alicia Eler: What is your interest in using art to connect people? Your paintings are really a collaborative exercise with the people you interviewed in different cities around the world.**

Anne Labovitz: I grew up in Duluth, and Duluth is geographically isolated even though it's got an international port. I lived abroad in Hanover, Germany, and Zurich, Switzerland, and I finished my graduate degree in Berlin. The project came out of my love for international. Duluth just doesn't have a lot of diversity the way — in terms of religion, cultures and large other differences that you would like to expose yourself to or be friends with. So I thought this would be an interesting way to humanize people in the other countries as well as the Duluth folks to people in other countries.

**AE: Was there something else beyond your love of travel that inspired you?**

AL: Yes, that in combination with my grandmother, who was an artist/refugee herself — she came from Lithuania. She was pretty eccentric and talked about [Martin Buber's philosophy of "I/Thou"](#) extensively. She was an artist and she was really my person on the planet. She saved me from myself when I had difficulty as a teenager — I was in treatment — and she loved me through letter writing. So there was a history of letter writing and that connects with the work, but it also connects to this Buber idea of when you see someone, whether you meet them or you just pass them in the train station, everything else melts away and you have some sort of a human connection.

**AE: After interviewing people in these various cities, either in person or via Skype, how did you come up with these very visual, painterly scrolls of bright colors and some text in English written on them as the final product, or the artwork?**

AL: It was sort of this endeavor to find that in the people I interviewed, and then [I wanted] to give that visually in a way to the communities. Each country got its own separate exhibition. So it is like a present almost. I sent the paintings to each city in a white bag in a suitcase. Everything fits inside that, under 45 pounds, even though you have 14 of these gigantic things that come scrolling out. Like Mary Poppins. My intention was that you feel

like, as a recipient, warmth and a sense of belonging and excitement, having opened the bag and being interviewed.

**AE: Were there any experiences that especially moved you?**

AL: People were very motivated to connect with someone and be a part of a project. The village in Iraq was the first. What was amazing was they just, they too are isolated – they were eager to connect and be a part of a community. At the time they were a new sister city, only two years. So it was outstanding to talk to them. They are freedom fighters so they are all fighting ISIS. They are major radicals.

I spoke with the mayor and that was an hour-and-a-half interview because he kept being like ‘so you have more questions?’ He didn’t want to stop. I spoke with a gentleman who runs two mosques and has three wives and 24 children – and I didn’t flinch, which is a really good thing. A couple of the women there run a school for the orphaned kids from the next village whose parents have all been murdered by ISIS. And then one time you are talking to someone and someone’s brother has to go to the front line and you’re like ‘OK let me know, I hope he comes back.’ Just a really intensive experience they are having. They hoped for freedom, and they hoped that their children would finish their education. In Kurdistan they couldn’t hope for peace, they had to hope for freedom because that comes first. So that really hit me hard.



*Above: Additional collaborative artworks made with Labovitz.*