Lar-Birger Sponberg (1929 –)  
McHenry County, 2003  
Oil on canvas

Deerfield Public Library  
Main Floor: on the South wall of the library in the Friends Book Sale

Born in Sweden in 1919, Lar-Birger Sponberg has been a Deerfield resident for over 60 years. His family emigrated to Illinois in 1941 and settled in Evanston. Sponberg attended the Art Institute of Chicago on a scholarship where he was licensed by his teacher, a former student of Pablo Picasso, particularly her use of dimensional space. During World War II, he painted signs and posters for the Army. His recent work has focused on Midwest landscapes as viewed from the road. Often these landscapes are composite images put together from photographs Sponberg takes from the passenger seat while his wife Drusilla drives. The image depicted is one he had in mind for a long time. He calls it, “basically a red shoe. ” Sponberg starts paintings with funereal canvases with red paint, and he has to be a little bit red of the red shoe through. Look along the edge or the road or in the bushes for some of these red lines. The painting was commissioned by the Deerfield Public Library and unveiled in 2004.

Sponberg strives to illustrate the “significance of the ordinary.” He often marks the significant events of our lives to fail to note the passages that lie in between. In using the Midwest landscapes as subjects of these paintings, I am calling attention to the extraordinariness of the commonplace, the in-between of the celebrated places as well as the in-betweens of our lives.

Deerfield has a strong tradition of public and corporate collections as well as several universities and U.S. embassies. He has been featured in solo and group exhibitions in Sweden, New York and Chicago.

Janet Austin  
Prairie Plants, 2010  
Stone mosaic, carved ceramic stoneware tiles  
Landing of the middle stratum, leading from Periodicals to Adult Services

This four-panel mosaic depicts an above- and below-ground cross-section of local plant and insect life. The mosaic uses carved ceramic pieces with matrixes. Evanston-based artist Janet Austin often works in mosaics and sculptures depicting the natural world, with a focus on species that are considered undesirable by humans but are essential to the ecosystem. Austin has many works of public art in the Chicago region and around the country. The inspiration for Prairie Plants came from a project Austin worked on at Deerfield Library. In 2010, DHS students participated in a program with the Chicago Botanic Garden, creating an outdoor prairie garden at their school. Austin hired to help make identification plaques for the plants in the garden. This inspired her to

Javier Vitalí (1911 — 2000)  
Nature Morte, 1953  
Oil on canvas

Deerfield Public Library  
Lower Level: On the wall in meeting room hallway, near Meeting Room A

This cubist still-life depicts a carafe, a glass, a plate, and two green apples. While preserving these objects in a characteristically flat-and diagrammatic way, Vitalí seeks to suggest depth and space. Look for the brown shadow cast on the table by the fruit or the highlights of green reflecting the fruit off the edges of the carafe. If you remind of Picasso, that’s because it’s by Catalan artist Javier Vitalí, Picasso’s nephew. He was very close to Picasso and was his brother, best friend, or the artist’s son. Picasso never had.

Vitalí lived in the family home in Barcelona and grew up surrounded by his uncle’s art. Vitalí’s mother Lola was a frequent subject of Vitalí’s early work. Picasso’s mother Marie nurtured the budding art career of her grandson, even teaching them how to sketch tomatoes. Javier Vitalí was instrumental in helping to coordinate Picasso’s donation of his works to Barcelona’s Museu Picasso in 1970. Though Vitalí had a successful career in France and Spain, he was sometimes wary of being away from Picasso’s shadow. Nevertheless, critics do see Vitalí as developing his own unique style.

This painting was donated to the library by Nathan Cummings when the library was built in 1971. It was hid- den in a boiler room (for years before being moved to the redesigned fiction room in the 50s.

Nathan Cummings (1890-1985)  
Nathan Cummings was a businessman and philanthropist who founded Consolidated Foods, which later became the Sara Lee Corporation. He also was named the country’s largest, most important art collectors, including major works of French Impressionists and contemporary painting and sculpture. Despite never completing high school, Nathan Cummings had an instinct for business—and for collecting art, working because he liked them, not for their value. He was famous for distributing paintings and sculptures to family and friends and to his businesses. He counted many artists, celebrities, and dignitaries among his close friends.

Cummings had homes in Winnetka, Chicago, and New York City. The Nathan Cummings Foundation was founded in 1949 and to this day supports online social justice and causes.

Deerfield, Illinois is fortunate to be home to world-class works of public art by nationally and internationally renowned artists, representing a wide variety of styles. This guide will illustrate the artists and their art, as well as focus on the fascinating stories of how these paintings and sculp- tures came to be part of Deerfield’s collection, from local artists to fa- mous art collectors.

This guide showcases nine artworks in walking distance from the library. The tour starts inside the library, then moves outside, along Washington Rd., and ends at the ART building on Deerfield Rd., where a brand new work by Michael Poster is on display.

PUBLIC ART in DOWNTOWN DEERFIELD

Guide and Map  
Deerfield, IL  
2017  
Text: Dylan Zavagno

Public Art in Deerfield is maintained by the Deerfield Fine Arts Commission. They also present the Deerfield Public Art Program, which selects new pieces each year for display in public buildings, on lots from the artists. There are many works of public art not featured here. Check the “Extensions” section at the end of the guide for more information and locations.

Tips for taking this tour:

The tour is best in good weather during daylight hours. Feel free to walk up to close sculptures and get various van- tage points on the grass, but please be mindful of planters and please don’t touch the artwork. Four of the nine fea- tured works are inside the library and can only be seen during library hours.

Mon-Thur 9am—5pm; Fri 9am—6pm; Sat 9am—5pm; Sun 10am—5pm.

An audio version—with maps and images—is available online or through the Deerfield Public Library Podcast feed: deerfieldlibrary.org/podcast, or on iTunes, Stitcher, or Google Play.

A virtual, 360-degree video tour is also available at deerfieldlibrary.org/librarytour, where you can find maps, audio, and more about our other local history tours.

About the author

Dylan Zavagno is the Adult Services Coordinator of Virtual Instruction and eResources at the Deerfield Public Library. He produces an eLearning video series and hosts the Deerfield Public Library Podcast, featuring interviews with notable community members and library-related guests. He studied education at National Louis University and holds a Secondary Education teaching license. Dylan graduated from DePaul University with a BA in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. In his spare time he loves reading and going to art museums.

Listen on an in-depth interview with artist Mary Block on the Deerfield Public Library podcast! deerfieldlibrary.org/podcast and iTunes, Stitcher, or Google Play.

Sources:

For a full listing of sources, please visit deerfieldlibrary.org/artist

More information can be found at artist’s websites:


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In front of Village Hall to the left of the building entrance

**Antoine Poncet** (1928 – )

* Carrara marble Village of Deerfield

**Antoine Poncet** was originally commissioned in 2005 by the Village to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the founding of Deerfield. It was finally erected in 2007, after the Village Hall renovation. Weighting in at over 20,000 pounds, the sculpture was selected from an open call for proposals. The only restriction: no deer imagery.

Block’s work was selected blind, without the knowledge that Block actually grew up in Deerfield. To Block, Deerfield means family. The statues depict a mother and father looking at each other with their children wrapped around them. According to Block, the particular shape of the statues and the way they lean towards each other was suggested by twisting tree trunks. The title was chosen after a naming contest.

**Finn Wilde** was running for office in 2017. Wilde, a current Deerfield High School Student, depicts the interaction of light passing through crystals against a deep purple background in this 10’ by 20’ mural. The mural was created under the supervision of DHS art teacher Michael Moran as part of the Deerfield Fine Arts Commission’s new mural program. Moran used the project as an experimental learning project for his advanced graphic design students. They studied well known mural and public art projects and how they interacted with the community. As with Mary Block’s “Generations” sculpture, the only requirement was that there be no deer imagery.

From a group of about 40 students, submissions were narrowed down to six students who presented their work to the Commission with an artist’s statement. The Commission voted to select the winning entry. Wilde’s statement reads: “The idea of my work was to capture the visual that is created by light passing through crystals, or facets. The various colors, transparency, size, and tones that are displayed show how the crystals react with one another. I decided to use many different colors to show variation and contrast in the piece, as well as different intensities of light. The design embodies the form of crystals, but also has many abstract elements in it as well. I chose to include a variation of form and shape that the crystals appear in to bring about a more interesting overall movement to the piece.”

Mike Moran said that the work was made in Adobe Illustrator and that Wilde played with gradients and opacity to create a unique effect of light passing through crystals. Moran also praised the work for giving the illusion of extending beyond the borders with the bottom corners suggesting more crystal formations. The Fine Arts Commission had planned on doing a mural project five years ago, but delayed due to construction downtown. The plan is for murals to rotate yearly in this space. Wilde said the program “presents a great opportunity for young Deerfield artists.”

**Deerfield’s Village Hall** has several notable works and can be seen during their regular business hours:

- **8 am – 4:30 pm Mon-Fri.** Go up the stairs to your right and at the top of the stairs, turn to look at the back wall where the DeerfieldBien-
    nennial Quilt is hosted. Stitched by 50 Deerfield women in 1979, the quilt depicts Deerfield life, institutions, and history. Also nearby on the upper level by the statues—note Prince-Duncan-Williams meticulously stitched silk mosaic, Jazzi, inspired by jazz music and his family’s traditional Ghanaian silk art as well as modern European and American art. Check the labels for more information and note the temporary works in this space as well.

- **Back at the Deerfield Public Library, head to the Youth Department to check out Fibonacci Sequences, a photograph of sunflowers. It’s just passed the youth Desk. It was made by Linda Trytek, a Deerfield resident inspired by one of your Youth Libraries—see the note below it for more info. In the corner next to Youth Graphic Novels is Robots, featuring nine prints of colorful robot characters from Chicago artist and Illustrator Jim Nelson. His work is featured in many children’s books as well as games like Dungeon and Dragons and Magic: The Gathering. Youth Librarian Amy Robillard (herself an artist) worked with Nelson to help select colors, placement, and framing.

- **In the Library’s Quiet Room (and several other locations) we have works on loan from local and area artists for the year as part of the Deerfield Fine Arts Commission’s Public Art Program. As part of the program there are also works in Deerfield Village Hall, in Deerfield Park District, Deerfield Public Works, DHR Chamber of Commerce, the Patty Turner Senior Center and some local businesses. Artist info, including contact info, is printed next to each work.

- **T. Barny’s Italian alabaster sculpture, Camea, in the collection of Holy Cross Church, located just north of Elder Ln. along Waukegan Rd. It was donated by the Turner family, members of that congregation. While not strictly a “public” work of art, Fred Turner was directly inspired by the sculptures in front of the Library and Village Hall and thought there should be other sculptures along Waukegan Rd. The artist’s intention is to depict intercon-

- **Neal H. Waneff is a lawyer, sculptor, and Highland Park resident whose work is “inspired by physical, metaphysical and emotional storms.” He donated two metal sculptures to the Village of Deerfield, located along Deerfield Rd. at the entrance to Deerfield Spring Pool, on either side of Lyons Dr. Cross Currents is in blue and ab-

- **Antoine Poncet’s “Incorruptible” is itself incorruptible. This abstract form evokes perhaps an ear or a parent holding a child—or just a fascinating form. Try walking around the sculpture for new insights. The idea of my work was to capture the visual that is created by light passing through crystals, or facets. The various colors, transparency, size, and tones that are displayed show how the crystals react with one another. I decided to use many different colors to show variation and contrast in the piece, as well as different intensities of light. The design embodies the form of crystals, but also has many abstract elements in it as well. I chose to include a variation of form and shape that the crystals appear in to bring about a more interesting overall movement to the piece.”

**Original Interview**

T. Barny

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**Deerfield Public Library — Detail**

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