

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville

About the Works for May–June, 2016  
Sanctuary Installation

The worship themes for  
May is Truth and Authenticity  
for June, Community

The artists represented are:

Jonah Eller Isaacs

Peggy Wilkerson

Jim Seavey

01



## *Paragon*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, triptych, cedar edging.

Photo 2014; print, 2016

Peggy Wilkerson suggested her photo, *Richland Creek Art Crawl* (03, right), of graffiti as an example of a kind of community art form. I thought that was brilliant and it brought to mind a series I had taken of similar overlaying efforts under a railroad bridge crossing Seven Mile Creek in Paragon Mills Park, of which I chose this example to mirror 'Richland Creek Art Crawl'.

Paragon Mills, about half a mile from my house, is center of the largest Kurdish population outside of the middle east – over 10,000 people. I don't know if that is reflected in the graffiti.



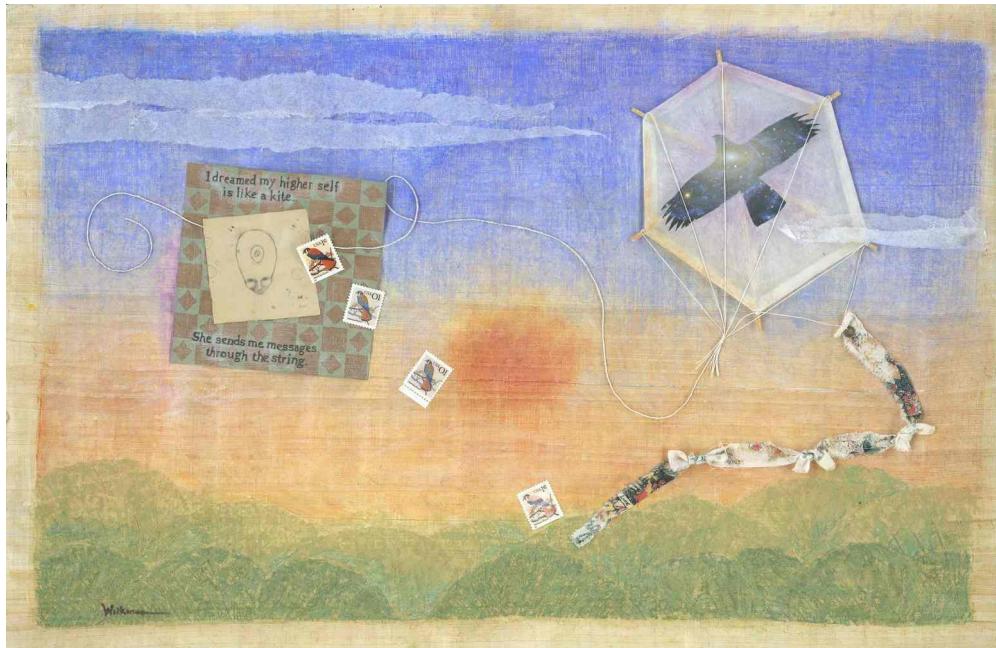
02

## *Kite Dreams*

– Peggy Wilkerson

Mixed Media, framed, 2008

I have been keeping a dream journal for many years. This dream is one of my favorites because it uses a kite as a metaphor for mindfulness of your own higher self. Flying a kite requires mindfulness of yourself, your environment and staying in contact with the string for continual communication.



03

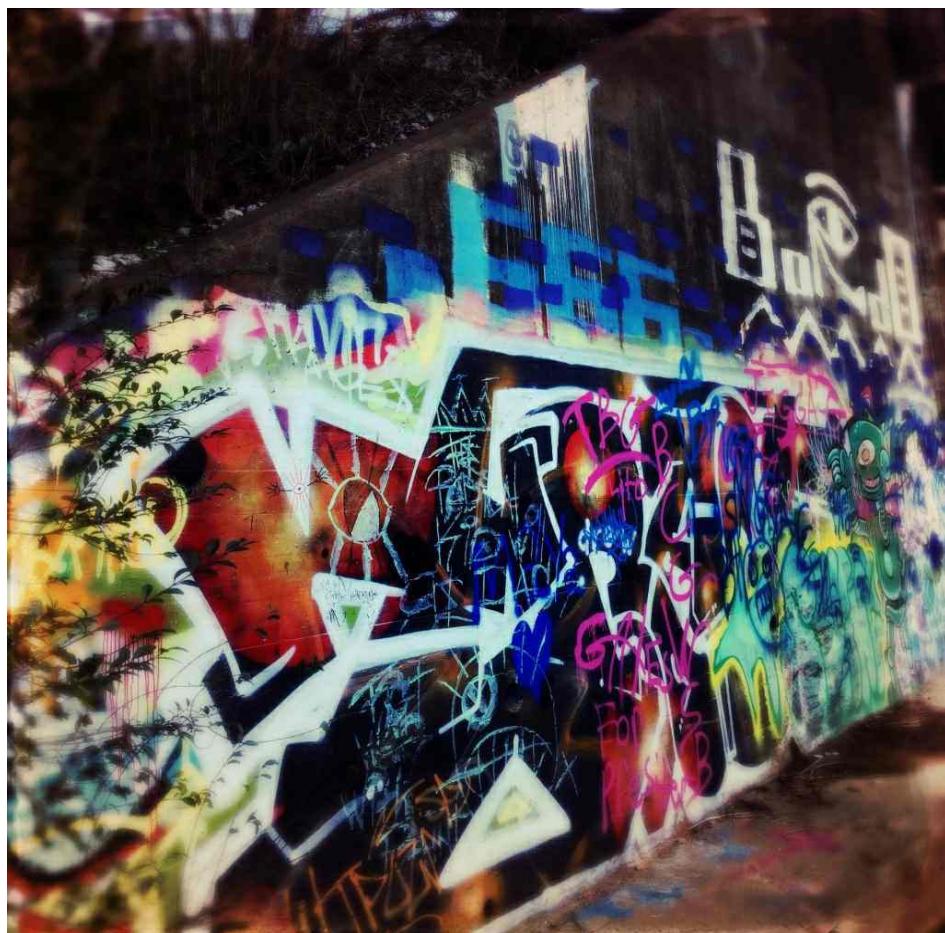
## *Richland Creek Art Crawl*

– Peggy Wilkerson

Photograph, archival print Canson Photographic Rag, triptych, cedar edge.

Photo and print, 2016

I love to check out the graffiti on the train trestles near the McCabe Golf Course. This one is particularly interesting because there are so many layers. How many people painted here? Did they know each other?



04



## *All That Remains*

*- Jonah Eller-Isaacs*

Acrylic on board, plumbing fittings and pipe, 2014

In October of 1991, I watched my world burn. Exiting our Sunday School class at the UU Church in Oakland, CA, we found a sky filled with miles of black smoke. "It's the Apocalypse!," we joked. Then it dawned on me that the flames were coming from my neighborhood. In the end, more than 4000 homes burned to the ground – in my tiny high school of 300, 80 families lost their homes. Our house was spared only when the hot winds changed and a distant fire department arrived. Just a block away were miles and miles of ash and disaster. Chimneys and teetering plumbing were all that remained.

Artist Statement, # 04, 05, 06

I never considered myself a painter. But in 2010, I wound up at The Creative Center, a New York City non-profit that offers free classes in a variety of creative disciplines to cancer survivors. Struggling in the depths of my illness, I had to find ways to alleviate the overwhelming strain of a grim prognosis. I signed up for a class on Abstract Expressionism and immediately discovered that the quiet retreat of the canvas provided me with transformative solace. At the urging of my wise, ancient instructor, I continued to practice my newfound love for painting long after the class. I paint to escape, to be lost in the interplay of color, light and texture. Influenced by Joan Mitchell, Mark Rothko and the later works of the near-blind Claude Monet, my works focus on emotional resonance rather than representation—though, of course, given my lack of requisite skill, I can't paint actual things anyhow.

05

## *Grouppaint*

– Jonah Eller-Isaacs

Acrylic on canvas, 2011

Each year, as a celebration of my birthday, we host a talent show. My talent at one of these parties was building a community that could create beauty. I placed a blank canvas in the middle of the room and asked our guests to help me create a painting. Everyone suggested the colors and location, and thus Grouppaint was born.



06

## Quadtych (Purple)

– Jonah Eller-Isaacs

Acrylic on canvas, 2016

In March 2016, my friends at the Wedgewood-Houston based abrasiveMedia hosted a Live Art Crawl, an art creation event open to the public. There were aerial dancers, musicians, photographers, poets, all making art while visitors looked on. For my part, I pinned four canvases together and painted them simultaneously, influenced by the creative mayhem on all sides. A slow drip might be a long, winding guitar solo, or a splash of pink the crazed movement of dancers practicing their work in progress. Making art can be a lonely process—but not this time.



07



## *Jowai Market*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 expedition of 6 members of FUUN to visit our partner church, Pingwait Unitarian, and the 113<sup>th</sup> annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Union of North East India in Jowai, Meghalaya, India, concurrent with the final celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> year of the founding of the Jowai Unitarian Church. The full report to the board of that trip is posted at the head of the entry stairs.

This is a typical scene from Jowai, the second largest city in Meghalaya, a state formed from Assam in 1972 to reflect the tribal communities as a political unit who have occupied this mountain plateau for thousands of years. Jowai is a center of commerce, particularly coal and gypsum, as well as a center for the agricultural villages surrounding it. It is the center also of the Jaintia tribe. For more, see posted materials.



08



## *Jowai Funeral*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

This funeral Gail and I were privileged to attend in Jowai, Meghalaya, India in 2011 was for a mother of young children who died of cancer. It was an example of how the cell phone has changed life for the Khasi people – the family members dispersed to other villages were all able to hear about the funeral in time to be there, so instead of a dozen or two, there were a hundred or two in attendance. Gail had provided grief counseling to the college age son the night before. The body was interred at the Unitarian cemetery with a procession through town after the service.



## Helpme and Biron

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 FUUN to visit to NEI, see posted report.

During the 113<sup>th</sup> annual General Assembly, held in conjunction with the year's end celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the first Unitarian church in Meghalaya at Jowai, many villages staged examples of their traditional local ritual dances and music. Helpme Mohrmen, a local professor, minister and past president of the UUNEI, here chats with Biron Lyngdoh Talong as he prepares to drum for the Nongtalong dancers. Biron lives in his wife's village now, as is customary, and is the UUNEI representative in that area, northeast of Shillong, some fifty miles by air.





## *Blesstar Ksniar*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

We traveled with Blesstar and others from the Annie Margaret Barr Children's Village, a dormitory for outlying village children to attend the Unitarian High School in Kharang, near Pingwait, to his home village of Wahmawlein on the top of a mountain ridge. He showed me one of the common agricultural areas, this one up a flight of about 150 steps carved into stone.





## *Umkhirmi Children*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Umkhirmi is a village of the Karbi tribe in Assam. Leiki Suchiang and Liridiam Muhkim of the Jaintian village of Muhkap were our guides to this remote territory. Our driver took the ford across the Myntang River which marks the border between Meghalaya and Assam, and all the passengers walked the foot bridge. The road bridge was being re-constructed. We were there during the dry season – the ford was unusable most of the year. We visited 3 villages, the largest was Jirikndeng which boasted a Catholic high school, for which the Unitarian church built a dormitory for the Unitarian villagers to be able to attend.





## *Pingwait Children*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 FUUN to visit to NEI, see posted report.

This youngster and her charge were at the Unitarian Church Pingwait when we got there, and showed up later at the home of Kong (Mrs.) Morilda Mynsong with the same querulous expression. Through out the area, small children of whatever gender were carrying smaller children about. One of the hallmarks of the Khasi ethos is caring for each other;

it is in fact a religious imperative, and one of the reasons so many are Unitarian. These two boys are in front of the Presbyterian church – denominational differences are also blunted by the co-operative nature of the Khasi people.





## *Lyridiam Mukhim*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Lyridiam and his youngest. He and his wife celebrated their honeymoon in Thailand – closer and friendlier to 'the Hill People' than the main part of India. He most assuredly had his suit made there. While many folks had turmeric roots split and drying on there yards, Lyridiam's concrete patio was piled with rice from the communal paddies. Here is turmeric at Leiki's house with her grandmother and other family.





## *Fairstar Bina*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 FUUN to visit to NEI, see posted report.

Fairstar is the secretary of the Pingwait church and the first to greet us. Mr. Player Marboh, the acting minister (under direction of Rev. Kong Darihun Khriam who has seven churches) was unable to attend as his wife was busy giving birth. Fairstar was a gracious host and we had long talks among us about our two churches. We had just recently been named officially Partners and had exchanged a lot of nuts and bolts info, but the personal contact was invaluable.





## *Nongroi's Father*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Nongroi Sutang is the Secretary of the Unitarian Union of North East India (UUNEI), a minister and teacher at the high school in Kharang, next to Pingwait. This picture of his father, whose name I did not get (and whose last name would be different, Khasi being matrilinear) in his home village of Wahmawlein. He is standing in the entrance of a village store which is perched on the cliff-side next to the main road – the size of a small garage. Wahmawlein and Mawlat, east of Pingwait, occupy the very crest of a long chain mountain, the characteristic of the erosion over eons of the Khasi Plateau. The rivers at the bottom of the mountain flowed toward Bangladesh, a delta country formed entirely of the eroded hills of Meghalaya. This fertile land is farmed during the day by the town residents, who trek the twisting mountain paths (a two hour hike) to sleep on the cooler mountain.





## *Leiki and Ibanylla*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Leiki Suchiang was the secretary of the UUNEI, the Jowai Church Unitarian (900 members), house mother to the AMB Hostel AND a student at the Jowai college when we met her. She is now the third woman Unitarian Minister in the Khasi Hills, assisting on Sundays in her home village, Muhkap, and still an area representative of the UUNEI, working in Jowai, traveling to villages and spending frequent Saturdays at the new location of the UUNEI offices in Shillong (Meghalaya's capitol). She married her childhood next door neighbor, who works 1400 miles away in Bangalore and is mother to a little girl. Ibanylla Langstang is daughter of the housekeeper of the Unitarian High School in Jowai, next to the church who is from Mukhap. Leiki and her mother are close because of that, and Ibanylla is as family. Leiki in Mukhap at her mother's home, cooking Gail and Jim breakfast.





## *Ksehryncchang Leader*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

We visited Kseryncchang on the morning of the funeral after visiting the famed (at least in Meghalaya) Nartiang Monoliths, somewhere between 500 and 5,000 years old – I didn't quite get it. We were there for the dedication of a new school which was still under construction (no bulldozers and cranes – everyone in Meghalaya has some kind of building skills. Leiki's father taught her how to make cinder blocks before he died when she was eleven. Buildings are hand made.) This man was the only Unitarian in town (having married in), but was the driving force behind the school's inauguration. He lived on a hillside with a commanding view of the valley – not as rugged as Wahmawlein but gorgeous nonetheless.





## *Ksehryncchang Carpenter*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

This fellow was hard at work even as the other half of the building was dedicated for use.





## *Umkhirmi Leader*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Umkhirmi is in Assam, one of the three villages we visited. The neighboring village, Rongkmjahn, founded 30 years ago by a single farmer, is one of the handful of villages in the region that are entirely Unitarian! This woman was moderator of the Umkhirmi Church Unitarian, the person who conducts the service, leading in prayers and hymns. The Khasi Unitarian prayer-book, Ka Jingshai Blei – The Light of God is expanded from the original 1879 book by H.K.Singh. We got our copy when it was re-issued after a long lapse in 2013, personally given by Leki Suchiang and Biron Talang at the GA in Jowai.





## *Kharang Mothers*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Another school under construction. This one in Kharang, where these women had come to the hill just above the local medical center (two room), to do just what we were doing – checking out the progress. That's Pingwait in the distance.



On the road back to Kharang, we see this young woman hauling construction debris and her froe in the ancient traditional Khasi basket and head band, available new in the street markets.



## *Pingwait Meeting*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 FUUN to visit to NEI, see posted report.

After meeting in the church in Pingwait, we strolled the quarter mile to the home of Kong Morilda Mynsong (peeking through curtain, right) where she prepared a lovely lunch. To the left is our UUNEI guide, Wanlang Mylliemngap, two Kong Mynsong's (Morilda's daughters) are center, and Fairstar Bina is to the right. The other curtain peeker is another villager helping with lunch whose name I did not get. Here is lunch – the fabulous red rice grown every where there is a river in an area that can be terraced, squash, cubed and boiled, fish (very bony), lettuce and broth.





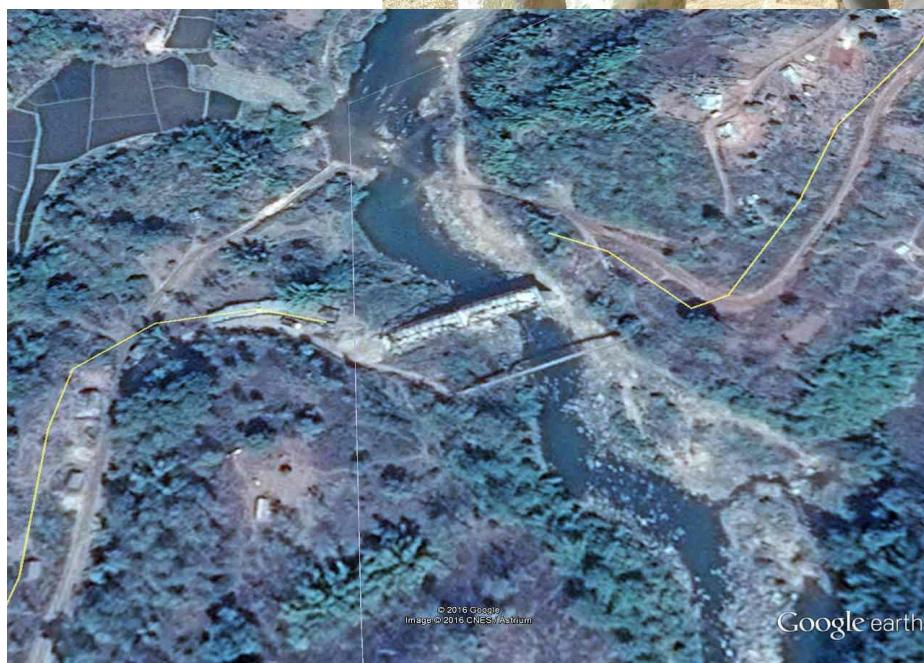
## *Umkhirmi Photographer*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

In Assam again – I had been taking a picture of the men behind this young woman, who was behind a post – when she popped out with her cell phone to take my picture as she took mine, everyone burst into laughter.



Myntang River – ford, bridge, and foot bridge from Google Earth on our trek to Assam. The yellow line imposed is the road, sort of, and the thin blue line the border. Sort of.



## *Thwissila and Children*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 FUUN to visit to NEI, see posted report.

Thwissela Kharbithai is the director of the Annie Margaret Barr Childrens Village, for which she is here at the 113<sup>th</sup> annual General Assembly of the UUNEI fundraising – notice she has someone's Tennessee drivers license in her hand. The AMBCV had recently been re-organized under the UUNEI with help from the U.S. UUPCC (Unitarian Universalist Partnership Church Council). When we visited, we were given an evaluation form to fill out. No such formality was required on our first visit, an overnight. I think these kids are hers, not AMBCV.

Here, in 2011, the AMBCV children are watching their Friday night treat, a Bollywood movie and 'Kindergarten Cop', neither in their native language, but equally likely for them to use – English being the common denominator and Hindi being official. (Most folks learn English early and are required two years of Hindi in Jr. High.)





## *Counting Collection*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From the 2013 FUUN to visit to NEI, see posted report.

Rev. Darihun Khriam, Rev. Nongroi Sutang, Ibanylla Langstang, and Rev. Leiki Suchiang getting ready to count the collection after a service at the 113<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly of the UUNEI. People from outlying villages and the capitol city of Shillong (a couple of hours away, about 35 miles as the crow flies) stay with families in town, usually with some connection, one village per family. Julian's host, Homeland Lamar, had half of Puriang dancing to drum and guitar well into the night in his front room.

This is a rare moment when Ibanylla wasn't glue to Sasha. See?





## *Ksehryncchang Class*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Lined up to listen to Gail help celebrate the new school building and the end of the winter break – part of January and most of February. The dry season is the best time to be outside and help with the gardening. This is one of the雨iest places in the world, clocking EIGHT FEET of rain per year in some areas. We visited endless schools, since virtually every Unitarian church had a school attached. We visited 24 churches out of the forty in NEI.





## *Rev. Darihun and Khlan*

– Jim Seavey

Photograph, archival print on Canson Photographic Rag, 2016

From Gail's 2011 sabbatical world trip, see blog with posted materials.

Rev. Darihun Khriam at her home hosting breakfast as we head out to visit her home church, Deingleing, and later Pingwait, our first contact. We last saw Darihun at our General Assembly in Providence R.I. in 2014 where she spoke the opening words at the Sunday morning service. With us is Khlanhiwot Lamare, Twissila's husband. Darihun's husband Lamok Kharbithai is a school teacher whom we met briefly before he left to teach. If he drives, it's about 6 miles, walking it's down and up, about half a mile. It takes about the same amount of time. Villagers very rarely own their own car as do Darihun and Lamok, using taxi's if any distance is required.

