



Jo Myers-Walker

August 2018 newsletter

May the Spirit be present and active!

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Repaired and in good working order

I'm walking through summer 2018 with new knees! Pain had been slowing me down, making it harder to go places, finish the Mercer project (*see page 2*), or even to sleep. So in October 2017 I dragged my knee in for a consultation to Steindler Orthopedic Clinic. I had surgery that month at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City to install an artificial knee, and later the other knee in February 2018.

Rehab starts right away after knee replacement. You are very stiff at first, but it is important to put physical therapy and your health first each day because you are worth it. I've been fortunate to have had good results, and the work continues.

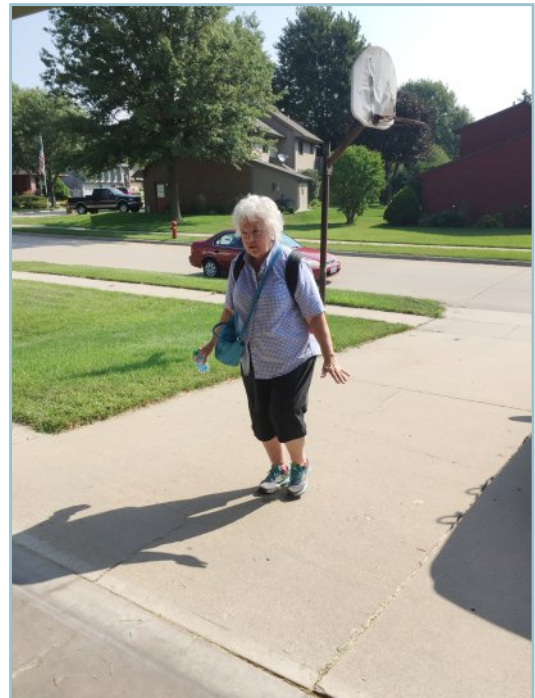
(continued)



My knee before installation, with a tiny self-portrait (the reflection on the metal looks like I already have three knees)



Fellow Franciscan Associate
Kelly and me working out,
strengthening my knee after surgery



Concentration
(going up Shelby's driveway)



Trying to point my toes, but sinking!
My right hand looks blurry from
sculling to keep afloat.

(continued)

For exercise, water aerobics at the Mercer Park Aquatic Center pool provides a low impact workout, and the cold water works sorta like an ice pack. “Dolphin Girl” is loving the water, blessing my knees and body and seeing the miracle of creation, as I meditate in the water loving my joyful body again, following the example of St. Francis. I also ride a stationary bike and walk.

My recovery has been a collaborative effort. Friends have brought groceries, given me rides, and offered prayers and well-wishes. Fellow artists stepped in to cover my booth if I needed to rest my knee during a show. I appreciate the many ways that many people have helped me get back on my feet again! I’m very thankful for the medical professionals I’ve worked with, and the scientists and researchers before them, whose work made my new knees possible.

Jo

Behind the scenes: Making the Mercer mural

Mercer Park in Iowa City, where I do water exercises at the Aquatic Center, is popular with people of all ages. I worked with University of Iowa students and staff, Iowa City Parks and Recreation, and other members of the Iowa City community to create a cityscape mural inside the Aquatic Center, celebrating what the park and the city have to offer. The mural is a 9' x 15' Lexan™ sculpture inspired by the theme of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math).

In addition to the lively painted scene, the sculpture has interactive features at child-friendly height. I measured how far children could reach and positioned items for both little kids and bigger kids. There are moving parts and special viewing ports, including iris mechanisms that close and open with the move of a lever to see a different tiny village beyond.

It would be hard to fit even the supplies for this project into my apartment, let alone have room to work on it! The Newman Catholic Student Center, where I’ve been working with the students, graciously allowed me to use their basement for studio space. The following pages show some of the steps and people involved in the mural’s progress.



Detail of the mural installed at Mercer Park
Aquatic Center in Iowa City

I check the installation every now and then to see if any knobs are missing or lights need to be fixed. Parents and grandparents send me pictures of their kids playing with the interactive features, and tell me they’ve made up names for their favorite characters!

Mercer mural (continued)

From inspiration...



...to sketch...



...to sculpture



Part of the project was researching with children to find out what they would want to see at Mercer. Some of the children drew for me. I wanted to convey a sense of fun that families have at Mercer Park.

Mercer mural *(continued)*

Student engineers Whitney Ryan and Grace Weiland, engineer John Kostman, and artist Deanne Wortman from the U of I's NEXUS program worked with me to design and create the Mercer mural's structure, lighting, special effects, and interactive parts.

The University of Iowa College of Engineering NEXUS Program is “a creative challenge for art and engineering students and faculty to achieve great outcomes collaborating with one another.” Creating a lasting artwork requires not only visual imagination, but also figuring out what materials will achieve the effect you want in a durable manner, and what tools and processes you need to transform them.



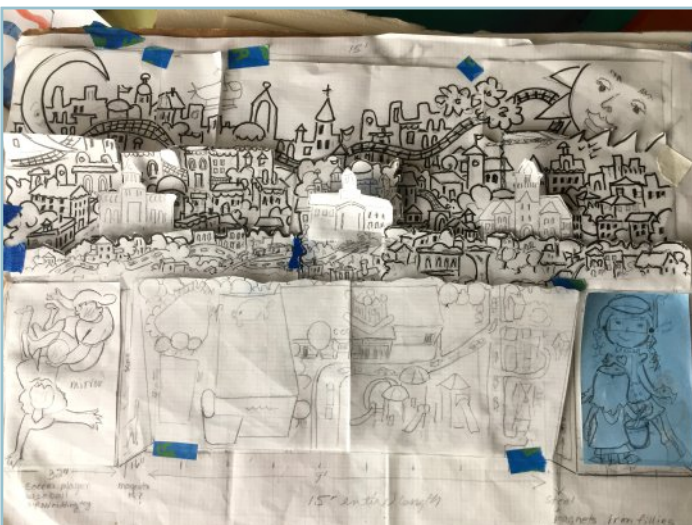
With engineers Whitney and Grace in the Newman Center studio *(photo courtesy of Deanne Wortman)*



Engineer & liaison Whitney with Mercer model



Goggles with diffraction grating and LED lighting create quite an experience



Starting with sketches, moving the parts around



Lexan™ cut out and starting to paint

Mercer mural (continued)



Spray painting incognito

The University of Iowa Engineering workshop cut the Lexan™ panels for the sculpture. Son Devin built the framework to support it. Iowa City Parks and Recreation staff got the wall at the Aquatic Center ready for us, moving trophy cases and painting the wall white. My watercolor students helped Devin and me bring the sculpture to the site in pieces, stuffed into the backs of our cars! Advanced Electrical Services installed the LED lights.



ISU student (now graduate)
Devin Walker building the framework



Our blank “canvas”: The wall at Mercer



Seeing how the pieces fit



Figuring out the lighting

Mercer mural *(continued)*

In the finished sculpture, the upper panels are flanked by the moon and sun with the city's downtown laid out between them, including landmarks like Old Capitol, the Courthouse, and the Clock Tower. A mosque, synagogue, church, and temple reflect diverse traditions of faith.



(Blue panel at lower left) The swimmers' faces reflect your own face like a funhouse mirror



Stepping back to see the wide view (9' x 15')

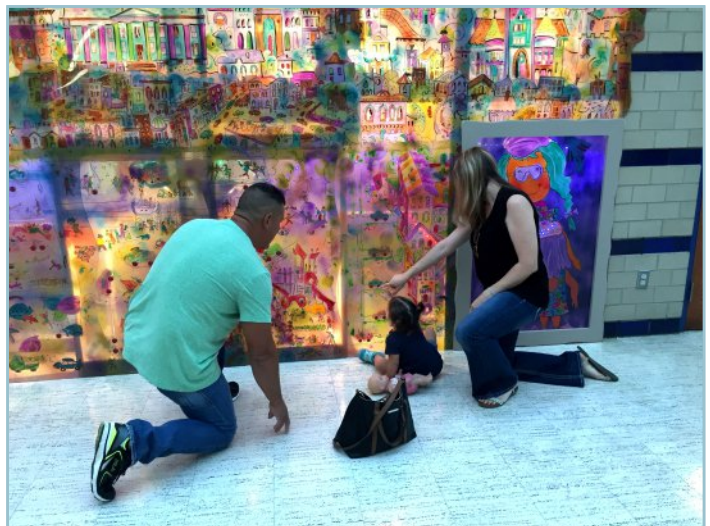


(Blue panel at lower right) Look through the heart or special goggles to see the miniature village beyond



Mercer's playground equipment takes center stage

The lower panels have the interactive features. Kids can "drive" red-wheeled cars and move swimmers and dolphins along paths cut into the sculpture. Front and center in the artwork is Mercer Park itself and the many things kids can play on, populated by animals from their drawings among the happy crowd.



A young Mercer Park patron *(seated)* parks a car in a neighborhood driveway



Stretched fabric prints



One of my current directions in artwork is taking advantage of the technology that's available now for digital printing on fabric. Digital textile printers can produce a huge range of colors within each print, with a high level of detail. Stretched fabric prints have the advantage of providing large artworks at a more affordable price than similarly-sized original paintings. The stretched fabric is also much lighter than glass and frame.

Here I've ordered a few of my downtown Iowa City watercolor scenes digitally printed on polyester fabric, then stretched onto frames for these large wall hangings. I really like the color printing on the polyester; I can manipulate the computer images made from the watercolors so that the prints' colors look juicy like the original paintings.

