



Emily Donovan Artist Statement

Community gardens fill acres of land within Ramsey County. These gardens are spaces where many can gather, spend time outside, grow food sustainably and celebrate diversity in our environment. My artwork, *Earth Stewards*, makes visible these community efforts using natural dyes and pigments, the same dyes and pigments used by cultures represented in our community.

Using the colors of nature is a tradition shared globally. To create this artwork, I expanded my research in natural pigments and dyes by focusing on both the indigenous and immigrant communities who live here. I found exciting continuities in this research. Sources of color in rich blues, yellow and reds have historic properties shared by all cultures.

I foraged and found materials to make colors that exhibit this universal trait. By over-dyeing multiple times, a variety of colors emerged from different sources. See <https://www.rchs.com/news/chamber-art/> for an index that includes the color used in this piece of art, and the regions of their origin. Each color is made by boiling the plant or insect material in water to make a dye bath. Similar to batik, I use a variety of waxes to mask off areas. This creates a space for the dyes to be absorbed thus allowing designs and imagery.

I was inspired by the artistry of our immigrant and native communities. There is the embroidery of Hmong story cloths, Henna designs from East Africa, and designs that illustrate indigenous food sources like wild rice. Figures are intermingled within the gardens. These figures depict a variety of activities such as planting, tending to the gardens, harvesting and enjoying the spaces.

Earth Stewards is an urban scene that captures the gardens and growers as they gather together and tend to their land. The once vacant space within our city is now rich with food, color and togetherness and is a place where we can grow something beautiful.

For more information on the Ramsey County Courthouse/St. Paul City Hall Council Chamber Art Project, full artists' statements and more, see <https://www.rchs.com/news/chamber-art/>

