

Pat:

Have you ever wondered how the Gallery came to be? Was hanging art in the church a controversial concept? Or was it perhaps, like the old Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland movies -- you know "Hey, I've got a great idea. Let's put on a show!"

I've been rooting around in the musty archives and have learned that the idea of exhibiting art here was neither a contentious proposal nor an impulsive notion.

It appears that Gallery space was included in plans for a remodel of the sanctuary building in 1966. Glenn Brewer was the architect for the project that included, among other things, rough cedar siding on the side walls of the sanctuary and fabric for hanging art on the back wall and in the foyer. Glenn worked with a Fine Arts Committee, the Board of Trustees and a building advisory committee. Financing of that remodel was difficult, but the congregation went ahead bravely. It sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Once details such as sales tax, insurance, and Gallery checking account were arranged, the Board gave the project its blessing. It was agreed that income from Gallery sales would be retained by the Gallery for expenses and, with board approval, purchase of aesthetic improvements not accommodated in the church operating budget. Gallery funds have provided the round tables and round tablecloths, our sanctuary chairs and two pulpit chairs, furniture for the North and South rooms, and soon the art glass for the two sets of entry court doors. \$2000 contributions to the operating fund have also been made annually for a number of years.

The Gallery's first show was in March 1967 -- 35 years ago this month! It featured the work of Walter Isaacs, for many years chairman of the University of Washington School of Art, and Jean Johansen*, who created our wonderful tree of life pebble mosaic and pebble mosaics in other places of public art in Seattle. She was also a fine sculptor and jewelry maker. Walter Isaacs was acclaimed by one critic as "except for Mark Tobey the major Seattle artist of the 1930-1960 period." East Shore owns one of his paintings, "Prodigal Son," a gift of the estate of his wife, Mildred Isaacs. "Prodigal Son" is a work from his late years as a neoexpressionist painter. It is a rather dismal picture, probably selected by the estate because of its biblical theme. It looks best in very good light.

The Gallery didn't limit itself to showing work of the area's best known artists. Children's art was also featured as were "family shows" that exhibited work of East Shore artists, "of which there were many" as was recorded in early Board minutes.

I worked in the church office from 1967-1984 and was fascinated by the variety of the Gallery's exhibits and loved hearing the Gallery women laugh as they hung shows. During the week I showed drop-in visitors around the Gallery, and once I sold a \$1500 bronze sculpture of an osprey -- a fabulous sum for a piece of art in those days.-- and still a very rare occurrence. I promised myself I'd join the Gallery Committee when I retired -- and I did.

Virginia Chambers is listed in Gallery records as one of the original members of the Gallery Committee, and she is still a vital contributor to all its activities. Two of the original members, Marge Fleming and Barbara Brotman, have died and two of them, Gloria Abbenhouse and Jackie Meurk, have moved away. Virginia can tell you more about artists who have exhibited here and the variety of shows the Gallery has presented over the years.

*Jean Louise P. Johanson (October 3, 1911 – March 1, 2000) was an American sculptor, mosaic artist, and jewelry designer. She was a student of sculptor [Dudley Pratt](#), and took two summer classes with [Alexander Archipenko](#) during his visits to the [University of Washington](#) in the 1930s. She graduated from the University of Washington in 1934. She had a solo show at the [Seattle Art Museum](#) in 1944 and won numerous gallery awards during her career. Johanson produced sculptural ornament for several buildings in the [Seattle](#) metropolitan area. She produced freestanding works as well, including a bronze fountain installed at [Seattle's Westlake Center](#). She was also known for her pebble mosaics. Joseph Young called her "among the foremost in the use of sandcast pebble mosaics". Her mosaic "Men Come and Go Like Waves of the Sea," named after a quotation attributed to [Chief Seattle](#), is installed at the [Pacific Science Center](#) in [Seattle, Washington](#). Johanson was the wife of architect [Perry Johanson](#).

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Virginia:

First, I would like to say thank you from the gallery committee for your financial support through your purchases and for your encouragement. Your praise and respect contributes much to the quality of our efforts and the time we volunteer. Many of our artists have come from the congregation and for many years Alice Owen, a well-known artist, now a member of the Edmonds congregation was our chairman. We never tire of hearing how much you appreciate our efforts.

The goals of the gallery committee have changed little since its beginning. We still want to provide a place for young, new, and established artists to show their work at a commission that allows them to make some money. We want to

add to the beauty and pleasure of our church and its members. We hope you will acquire new information about the arts and the various art mediums. Finding a gallery to show their work was particularly important when there was only one other gallery on the Eastside. William Ryan, the well-known marine painter whose oils and watercolors command thousands of dollars, had his first major show at East Shore in 1968 and has always said that the exhibit was an important beginning to his career. Exhibiting a variety of arts and artists gives all of us an appreciation and respect for the diversity and vitality of other cultures and communities. We have had shows of Native American, Asian, Scandinavian, African American, Tibetan and Korean art. East Shore member Jan Bogle organized a one-woman show of her photographs portraying life and art in Sri Lanka and Pat Davenport produced two successful retrospective shows celebrating 21st and 30th birthdays which included as many as 50 artists who had contributed work over the years. Our own multi-talented Ron Hammond organized the first exhibit in our new gallery space by the f5.6 group. Ron also negotiated the permanent photography space in the administration building and is responsible for the excellent lighting and other aspects of our new gallery spaces.

The early holiday shows which have become a mainstay of gallery finances were known as Christmas Boutiques. Now we know many church members depend on the gallery holiday shows for gifts and ideas. Handmade soap and the attractive hand-screened tea towels are best sellers. Gallery members try to plan shows that provide aesthetic enrichment for East Shore members and all who come into our church. Out of deference to non-church members who use our facilities for weddings, memorial services, and meetings, we try to stay away from confrontational and controversial works of art.

A frequent question gallery committee members are asked is "Where do you find your artists?" All of the committee members attend fairs and shows in Bellevue, Seattle, Kirland, Edmonds, Tacoma and other areas, looking for talent. Artists who show in the gallery tell other artists and word of mouth brings us many talented people. As I mentioned before we often show the work of artists who are members of the congregation and family shows bring out a lot of member-talent. These artists come quickly to mind---Bill Kent, Ren Haugland, Jane Simmons, Jeanne Gardiner, Sheila Ralston, Barbara Hammond, Susan Womeldorf, and Elaine Holmquist are just a few of our own. We usually ask new artists to bring their work, pictures, or slides to our gallery meeting so we can judge whether or not they meet our requirements. The fact that we take a 30% commission rather than the more usual 40 or 50% is also a draw for artists.

Although artists have a reputation for being temperamental and hard to work with, our experiences have been, almost without exception, quite the opposite. They are vital, enthusiastic and appreciative. A recent very interesting artist is Karin Mesmer, the glass artist commissioned by the gallery committee to design and create glass panes for the two sets of doors in the entry court. Karen felt she needed to understand more about Unitarianism before she could develop her designs. She met with Peter Luton, came away inspired, and we think you will be delighted with the results and your imaginations challenged by her creations. The panes have been sent to Arizona for lamination and we look forward to their installation. The gallery committee has been saving money for this project for many years. Records show that the need for improved front doors was first brought up in 1965, even before the existence of the gallery committee. Some visions require considerable patience before they become reality. In this case, 37 years! The English philosopher Alfred Whitehead said "Art flourishes where there is a sense of adventure." Church member Mares Strehler put it even better when she said, "Art feeds my soul." We hope it feeds yours.