

-----

### **Visioning -- Gallery Committee**

I wish that I could be at the visioning meeting on January 22. I have a good excuse, however -- we are having an opening reception and artist lecture for the administration building's gallery show. I wish you could be there also!

### **Who am I to have an opinion?**

I love having a gallery in my church. One of my proudest moments was when a visiting artist walked into our sanctuary's foyer and said to me "It seems so right to walk into a church and find that it is full of art."

In fact, I was briefly on the gallery committee -- maybe for a couple of years -- quite a while back. More recently, I have done specific tasks for the gallery committee -- I painted the walls at least twice, designed the lights for the main gallery and for the rear of the sanctuary, bullied the contractor's lighting designer into doing it the way we wanted, bought and installed the extra light heads that we needed after the contractor failed to order enough, bullied the contractor's interior designer into painting the walls the colors we wanted, helped hang several shows, took photographs both of the space and for show records.

I have been a long-time advocate for visual art at East Shore. I also have a long history at East Shore and a long memory of good things that have resulted from having an emphasis on visual art in our church. I would very much like to see the gallery committee broaden its activities in support of visual art. So here goes:

It seems to me that the gallery committee has become more and more focused on boutique shows of works that are modestly priced and that sell well and then using the funds generated to purchase art for the church or for other purchases that are likely outside of the operating budget. Years ago the committee had a broader charter in visual art that even included an advisory role in aesthetics in general -- even in selecting colors for painting the walls. I would like to see the committee return to a broader consideration of visual art in the church. Here are a few examples:

We rarely have a single-artist, gallery-hung show that we mount first and foremost because the work is wonderful. We had one very recently but the last one before that I remember was the Alice Case show of several years back. No the work did not sell well. Yes, the work looked wonderful on our walls. It brought work from a rising young artist to the gallery that very few of our members were aware of. It raised the reputation of our gallery in the local art scene. I believe that we should mount one or two such shows each year.

We rarely have a show in cooperation with the photography group and administration building gallery. I believe that the only one we have ever had was a summer show perhaps 10 years ago. Frankly, I doubt if many of the gallery committee ever come see the shows we hang in the administration building or come to some of the excellent guest speakers (not all photographers) that we have at our meetings. Our guest shows (such as the one now up) feature mid-career artists.

We rarely have a show that involves the entire campus. The only one I remember was a traveling show ("All kinds of families." or words to that effect). Work from that show and from artists in our community were hung in both gallery spaces and in the education building hallways. It was a wonderful show that drew a lot of traffic from outside our church as well as from our community.

We rarely sponsor an adult program concerned with visual art. I understand that the Peace Team is sponsoring such a program this spring featuring church member and BAM docent Laura Dillaway speaking about art and war. In an ideal world the gallery committee would be co-sponsoring it. Years ago East Shore had an art history series with outside lecturers -- the one I vividly remember, done to a near-capacity sanctuary audience, was on the American painter Jerome Witkin.

Beyond program issues, I believe that the gallery committee should broaden its outreach to the church community in advocating for visual art -- for instance, we should have an attractive catalog of the church's art collection. Few of our church members realize how much and how wonderful our collection is. Virginia Chambers and I tried to start a catalog project several years ago but it died for lack of support. (We need the catalog for insurance purposes also -- I'll bet we would be astounded at the collection's value.)

As far as I know, East Shore does not have a policy on accepting gifts of art. In an ideal world the committee would work with our ministers and board to develop such a policy. In that same ideal world we would also coordinate rotating shows of wall art from the collection in the church's public spaces (education building entry, library, admin. building atrium ...) so that the art hung there would become more than just something to cover the walls.

regards to you and good fortunes in visioning a broader role for the gallery committee.

Ron Hammond

[www.ronfstop.com](http://www.ronfstop.com)

[www.notbadbutisart.blogspot.com](http://www.notbadbutisart.blogspot.com)