

Celebrating 60 Years of Service

Gallery Council Has Raised \$2 Million for the Gallery and its Programs

February 14, 1940. The Rochester newspapers were filled with the ominous events that would soon lead America into war. Closer to home, the winter's worst snowstorm snarled traffic and closed schools. Yet for MAG, it was a very bright day indeed, as the Gallery's Women's Council held its first meeting.

Like so much at the Gallery, the Council's beginnings were inextricably linked with the Herdle family. The all-volunteer group was the brainchild of the Gallery's director, Gertrude Herdle Moore, and both she and her sister, curator emeritus Isabel Herdle, were among the "founding mothers" present at that first meeting.



Boats—Blue Square, by American artist Paul Resika, was a 1999 gift of the Council.

"To look back on these years is to be grateful for Gertrude and Isabel, who set the highest goals for the Gallery," says Marion Hawks, who joined the Council as a new bride in the 1940s. "They made volunteering rewarding for us all and gave it institutional stature."



In 1955, MAG director Gertrude Herdle Moore (second from right) took tea with Council members in the Fountain Court.

Two million and counting

The mission of the new organization was to raise funds and provide volunteers for some of the director's most cherished outreach programs. (Some, such as scholarship aid for young Creative Workshop students, continue today.)

The Council's first major fund-raiser was a 1942 exhibition of the Thorne collection of miniature rooms, first seen at the New York World's Fair of 1939. Some 19,000 people visited, netting the then-spectacular amount of \$1,500.

Six decades later, the group has raised some two million dollars for the Gallery, its collections and its programs (list at right).

Today, of course, the biggest money-maker is MAG's annual Clothesline Festival. Since 1962, the Council has operated food concessions at Clothesline—a massive undertaking involving hundreds of volunteers. Weather permitting, these concessions net as much as \$30,000 in support of Gallery programs.

Second in importance is *Art in Bloom*, a popular three-day biennial celebration of gardens and gardening which was inaugurated in 1978.

Other major fund-raisers over the years have included galas ranging from April in Paris (1956) to the Tapestry Ball (1996), art tours at home and abroad, and Just Jazz. More recent innovations include Third Thursdays, Tuesday's Treasures, and Collections and Cuisines.

Changing times

In the past decade the organization has undergone significant changes. No longer the Women's Council, it officially changed its name to the Gallery Council in 1994, three years after welcoming its first male members. And it has worked to broaden its membership by offering more evening programs, sponsoring social events for singles and streamlining the membership process.



Gertrude Herdle Moore and Isabel C. Herdle, MAG's former director and curator, were the Gallery Council's "founding mothers." In 1985, they posed for photographer Gary Graham.

Some things haven't changed, however. Even as more and more of its members are working outside the home, the Council's membership remains steady at around 400—four times the membership in 1955. And unlike many volunteer organizations, Council membership still carries a work requirement (currently two projects a year).



In a typical year, more than 300 volunteers roll up their sleeves in Clothesline food tents.

But members also reap the rewards, notably a sense of commitment and a sense of belonging.

Good company

"A company of self-found friends" is how *Gallery*

Notes, the precursor to *MAGazine*, described the group in 1940.

The description still fits today. Council president Mary Koegel recently accepted the resignation of a long-time member who was moving out of town. "She felt saddest of all to be leaving behind the Gallery and her friends in the Council."

Gloria Horwitz, a member since the 1950s, calls the Gallery "a focal point of my life." And Jean DeHaven, who joined in the 1980s, writes that the Council has



At the 1990 opening of *Furniture by Wendell Castle*, sponsored by the Gallery Council, Essie Germanow presented the artist with an embroidered vest from the Council.

given her "good friends, diverse activities and interesting challenges—all in the guise of giving."

The greatest beneficiary, of course, is the Gallery. "No volunteer group has been more significant to our success than the Gallery Council," says director Grant Holcomb. "This group's dedication has helped make our institution a national leader in museum volunteerism."

Council Gifts (partial list)



- **Permanent collection:** Such well-loved works as Rigaud's *Archbishop of Paris* and Durand's *Genesee Oaks* were Council gifts. Appropriately, the Council has also donated major works by women—Angelica Kauffmann's *Portrait of John Monck*, Rachel Ruysch's *Floral Still Life*, Helen Frankenthaler's *Seer* and Lilly Martin Spencer's *Peeling Onions*. Last year, the Council gave Paul Resika's *Boats, Blue Square* and contributed towards the purchase of Neil Welliver's *Dead Pine*.
- **Exhibition underwriting:** Council support brought the 1990 blockbuster, *Furniture by Wendell Castle*, to MAG.
- **"Let the Art Live On":** Council support was an integral part of MAG's \$10 million campaign for operating endowment, which reached its goal in 1997. In addition to an organizational pledge of \$250,000, individual pledges from 100 percent of the Council's membership totaled \$2.4 million. Leading the way were 16 past presidents who pledged nearly \$1 million.
- **Campaign for the Eighties:** A café operated by the Council during the 1984 exhibition *La Revue Blanche* showed that a Gallery restaurant was an idea whose time had come. In 1988, the Council's pledge of \$200,000 to the capital campaign helped to make the restaurant a reality. A second gift of \$100,000 underwrote a new gallery of ethnographic art.
- **Scholarships:** Over six decades, the Council has supported Creative Workshop scholarships for children. In the last fifteen years alone, scholarship aid has totaled nearly \$100,000.
- **Artist awards:** Since 1957, the Council has sponsored an award honoring Gertrude Moore and Isabel Herdle in the Rochester-Finger Lakes Exhibition. The Council also funds the annual Scholastic Arts Award given to an area high school student.
- **Publications:** Since 1993, the Council has underwritten *MAGazine*—including the full-color Maxfield Parrish issue—for a total of more than \$200,000. It's not the first time the Council has paid for a Gallery publication: In 1968, Council funding made possible the first handbook of the collection.
- **Docent program:** Organized by the education department, this program might never have gotten off the ground without Council support.
- **Et cetera:** Among the "small" gifts too numerous to list are a Steinway piano (1970), furnishings for the Council conference room (1987), imaging equipment for the public relations office (1997) and a digital camera for the curatorial department (1999).

ABOVE: In 1988, director Grant Holcomb unveiled the Council's 75th anniversary gift to the Gallery—*Peeling Onions* by American artist Lilly Martin Spencer.