

Types & Shadows

JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF QUAKERS IN THE ARTS

Issue #11, Fall 1998

The Making of a Quaker Art Gallery

A report by Chuck Fager, Clerk
Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts

FQAers were very excited about the 1998 FGC Gathering of Friends in Wisconsin. Over 1700 Friends were expected to attend; and of special interest was the fact that the host campus, the University of Wisconsin at River Falls, had its own art gallery. We were thrilled when this fine, large space was promised to us, to be the home of the first major exhibit of Quaker art, at this, the largest of annual Quaker Gatherings.

Imagine our shock, then, when we arrived at River Falls in late June, cartons full of artwork in tow, only to be told that the Gallery space had been pre-empted by the school's theatre department. We and our collected art works had been evicted, made homeless, with no notice!

Worse yet, when we lobbied for an alternative exhibit site, we were shown a room that was in a shambles. It had been half torn apart for rebuilding, with ceiling tiles dangling, two walls adorned with bare metal studs, the floor covered with dirt and junk, lousy lighting, no ventilation, and the air conditioning kaput. That was all they could do; take it or leave it.



Before - A Mess

The Making of a Quaker Art Gallery - 2

What to do?

We fumed. We raged. We wrung our hands. We tried to Mind the Light, while sweating in the closed room enveloped in the humid Wisconsin summer.

Then we got down to work. All right, no more complaining: if this was the space we had, then by golly we would make a gallery out of it!

After some brainstorming, we decided to cover most of the bare walls with oversized butcher paper, white on some walls, black on one other. We cleaned and swept the place. We pestered the conference staff constantly about getting the air conditioning fixed. And in a total act of faith, we announced that our opening party would be held, on schedule, on the opening First Day of the Gathering.



FQA Clerk Chuck Fager and skilled crafter Lynne Heritage struggle to attach the butcher paper to the wall.



Minnie Jane, FQA's Founding Clerk, lines up a section.

FQA Board member Margo Gulati surveys the ongoing transformation.

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To make a long story short, we did it.

By First Day morning, the walls were covered and made presentable, the junk was moved out and the floor cleaned, the art works went up, and -- miracle of miracles -- the air conditioning came on just a few hours before our opening! We had a Quaker Art Gallery!

We named the space the Lemonade Art Gallery -- they gave us lemons, and we made it something sweet!

And what a fine Gallery it was, if we do (humbly) say so ourselves. Here are some glimpses of what the Gallery looked like when it was done, along with some of the artworks it displayed. (We wish the lighting had been better; but that we couldn't fix.)



Mary Beth Webster's wall hanging highlights the north wall.





Sculpture and paintings by Dorothy Ackerman were featured in this corner.

Drawings by Friend Asa Watkins, part of a series from his World War II CO work in a mental hospital, are set off by the black butcher paper on the east wall.

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Ceramics by John Martinson on the table, and exotic photographs of India drew attention to the southeast corner.



Bonnie Beverstock and her intricately detailed quilt, which elicited many favourable comments.



Lucy McIver examines her block prints on the west wall.

A wood sculpture by Lynne Heritage is in the foreground, with Bonnie Zimmer's fine photographs behind it on the south wall. Anne Scott Plummer's sculpture of a dancing figure sums up the gallery's exuberant spirit.

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Many Friends visited the Lemonade Gallery during the week, and in addition to our exhibits, we used the room for a series of readings and performances. Quaker author David Morse read from his newly-published novel, [The Iron Bridge](#). Others read poetry and short stories from FQA's new collection, [The Best of Friends, Vol 1.](#), discussed the history of Quaker art (there's more of it than we usually think), and performed simple, striking dramas.

All too soon, the weeklong Gathering drew to its end, and it was time to take the Gallery apart.

We closed it with a pizza and lemonade "gala", and the FQA Lemonade gallery, despite its tumultuous beginning, was a success.

Although the Gallery is now gone, it is not forgotten. We look forward to recreating it at the 1999 Gathering of Friends in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Thanks for visiting our "Online gallery". Watch the [FOA page](#) for news of plans for next summer's FQA art gallery at the Gathering!



Bonnie Zimmer prepares to dismantle her photo exhibit.



Paula Draper and her vivid circular watercolour, which brightened up the once-again bare west wall as we were packing up.



We left a bit of graffiti as a memento.

One Meeting's Inner-City Art Ministry

by Esther Mürer

based on interviews with Minnie Jane, John Grauer, and Joyce Halley

Frankford Particular Meeting, at Unity and Walnut Streets in northeast Philadelphia, is the oldest meeting in Philadelphia. Frankford was originally settled by Swedes and Dutch. Quakers came there early, and the neighborhood has been peacefully integrated since the late eighteenth century. Since the 1930s it has been increasingly depressed. Frankford Avenue divides it socially and economically; Frankford Orthodox MM, to the west, is in a largely blue-collar area; the area to the east, where Unity and Waln is located, is the second largest welfare community in Philadelphia.

The meeting, although 300 years old, has been under the care of Green St. MM for the last hundred years or so. Ten years ago Joyce Halley, the clerk, was the only member and faithfully attended meeting for worship by herself. Today it has more than a dozen active members and attenders, and holds its meetings for worship on two Friday evenings a month, followed by social hour and discussion.

The meeting shares its space with the Northeast Community Mental Health/Mental Retardation Center during the week. The meeting is also active in neighborhood coalitions for human relations and works with other churches to feed the homeless.

Now they have started their very own art project. They received \$4000 from the Longstreth Fund, earmarked "to be spent on children", and puzzled how best to use it. Minnie Jane, a member of Trenton MM but regular Friday night attender at Unity and Waln, suggested that rather than giving it away they use it to run a series of art classes for the children in the neighborhood. The teachers would be paid a modest amount and eventually the teaching would be turned over to people in the community.

The meeting liked the idea. Minnie Jane held two experimental classes at the meetinghouse in May 1997, then called in John Grauer, a painter and member of Willistown MM. They held classes on two Saturday mornings a month from September 1997 to June 1998. Since some of the children wouldn't have had breakfast, the classes included a snack.

John says: "I treat the kids as individual painters. Although the work is spontaneous, there is always a learning element. I bring work by well-known painters to show. The kids work with water color.

"I divide the time between inside and outside of meetinghouse. As a memory exercise I have the children go out and walk around, observing the surroundings—whether the greenery of the meetinghouse grounds or the cityscape—and then come back inside and do a painting from memory. The kids are learning how to see."

Another exercise is to cup their hands together to make "viewfinder." Using their hands as a frame they "take pictures", from close up and far away. They pick up a small object such as a leaf or twig, look at the distant vista and hold up the small object against it. Then they bring the small object back into the meetinghouse, draw it and add the background from memory.

In the course of the year there were guest teachers as well: editorial cartoonist Signe Wilkinson gave a class, and a ceramicist brought and demonstrated a potter's wheel.

Other members of the meeting help with snacks and sometimes participate in the art work. The parents tend to be too frightened by the unfamiliar setting to join in. But they did come in June, when a party was held for them and the artwork displayed in the meetinghouse.

The meeting has received a grant from Philadelphia YM's Chace Fund for the program's second year, and is holding the Longstreth money in reserve. They hope to make the classes more truly a neighborhood project by hiring a local artist from the community to take over the teaching. They also plan to pay a few of the program's "veterans" a modest amount to serve as teaching assistants.

When a local teacher is found, Minnie Jane and John hope to start a similar project at another meeting. They see these classes as modeling a way for meetings, particularly those in inner-city neighborhoods, to reach out into their communities.

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Creating a Quaker Arts Camp

by Rebekah Rice

While I was growing up, neither my parents nor anyone else in our Meeting ever said anything about the desire to create as coming from the Creator. No one in our Meeting ever shared any type of message from God other than the spoken word. Until I was an adult, I was never exposed to a message delivered as song or music. As someone who has always had a better set of tools for building things than for putting ideas into words, I was disappointed but not surprised that I sat through Meeting for Worship for well over 30 years before being moved to speak.

But had I known I could share something else, some odd thing I'd been moved to make, some garden flowers I'd grown, what then? What will our earth be like, I have wondered for years, when we bring up our children knowing their gifts as God given? How will our worship be different when each of us is given all the tools we need to have in order to share the messages we are given to share?

This past year I was given the opportunity to birth a camp that has the potential to answer these questions. In December I was unexpectedly sent an invitation to apply to become the director for Quaker Arts Camp, a new camp within Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Although I had moved to upstate New York six years earlier, I had never moved my membership from Roanoke Monthly Meeting. Friends from BYM remembered me, and had suggested I be approached. Perhaps it is fortunate that I hadn't a clue how much work would be involved.

For several years, the Arts Camp Subcommittee of the Religious Education Committee of Baltimore Yearly Meeting had gathered information on whether families would be interested in sending their children to a week-long arts camp program. It was clear that families were indeed interested, both in an arts camp and in a shorter than two-week long sleep-away camp experience. Baltimore Yearly Meeting has an active camping program with wonderful programs based on outdoor challenge. When the Camping Committee was approached about expanding their offerings to include a shorter arts-based camp, they felt that it was outside their area of expertise and declined to oversee it. The Arts Camp Subcommittee continued to independently pursue their vision of building Quaker community based on the arts. In January 1998, I was hired as camp director, with the charge to move the Arts Camp from idea to reality in six months. With support from the committee, from Sandy Spring Friends School where Arts Camp was held, and from staff, volunteers, campers and families, our camp has become a reality.

Are you wondering what it's like when nine talented staff and thirty-six excited artistic campers get together? It's fun, and busy, and a week is really not long enough to stop and savor the

experience. Campers had their choice of four week-long morning workshops this year: Weaving, Dramatic Improvisation, Dance, or Music. Each afternoon, campers could choose activities from a varied array.

In the course of the week we worked with clay, silkscreened t-shirts, worked on costumes and masks, made books, shared stories, dammed a creek, made a water slide, swam, went rock climbing, did the low ropes course and lots of new games and other outdoor activities. In the evenings we had visits from a storyteller, a puppet theater, and a potter who did an outdoor firing of our pottery. We had a wonderful talent show in which every single camper participated. We had a half-hour Meeting for Worship twice a day, and found it to be deeply rewarding. We sang together a lot and yearned for even more singing. We put on a performance at the end of the week which brought the strands of the different workshops together for the first time.

Campers had a wonderful week. Some were thrilled by the opportunity to deepen in an area they hadn't expected, some wished they could try absolutely everything. It turns out that Arts Camp is a safe and nurturing environment for children with physical disabilities, children from inner cities, and children from non-Quaker as well as Quaker families. One non-Quaker family wrote that the most positive aspect of camp for their child was the "chance to be a true friend."

Next year, we expect to hold two sessions of Quaker Arts Camp. The specific workshops we offer will depend on the gifts of the staff. We'll have a two-week camp for campers 10-13 and a one-week camp for 9-12 year olds. Each session will be limited to 40 campers, and will be held at Sandy Spring Friends School. The following year, we hope to hold additional sessions as needed, and as space permits.

2001 Update:

This camp has grown into Opequon Quaker Camp, a residential wilderness camp with an arts focus near Winchester, VA. Our programs are founded on Quaker values of equality, simplicity, stewardship and nonviolence. We promote positive community living, spiritual growth, creative exploration and challenge.

For more information contact:

Josh Riley, Camp Administrative Secretary, Baltimore Yearly Meeting,

bymcamps@icg.org or 301-774-7663

or visit the camp's page on the [Baltimore Yearly Meeting website](#)

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Too Much Simplicity

by **George Sanders, Toronto MM**

*Right: "Mes Aieux." Acrylic, 1990.
Painting by George Sanders.*



"Too much simplicity." This was a comment I read last year in the guest book at an exhibition of my paintings in Bracebridge, Ontario. I was amused, as I thought it a compliment rather than a criticism.

In my work I am more often able to achieve my Quaker values than I am in my daily life. In fact my values as an artist are what led me to feel at home with Friends. Life imitating art again. I try to approach my creative life with honesty and simplicity, and hope to experience a spiritual realization with my work. My work stands for me and my values, and when it is out of my huge storehouse it stands alone on its own without me to explain it or defend it.

Does one's life show in one's work or does one's spiritual growth show in the works created by any artist? I feel that if our pain were overt in our work it would be sentimental and not constructive. I have used my work for therapy and I am amazed at what has emerged. When my mother was dying I drew her several times and made paintings. I did not look at these for many years. When I did, I was overwhelmed by the strength that I had realized in these images of my mother.

It is interesting to hear what other people take away from a work even if it is "too much simplicity." I had a painting I had started 20 years earlier at the time of my divorce. I had stopped because the underpainting had seemed complete. I at last felt I should finish this painting. I felt this was a bright direct painting of a girl on a Canadian farm, a scene typical of my childhood. The judge in a jury show chose this painting to talk about the loneliness and pain in it. I was really amazed.

My photos often seem to me to be more successful at capturing the quality that I should like to have in my paintings, but like all artists I understand nothing about my own work.

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