

# The Making of a Quaker Art Gallery

A report by Chuck Fager, Clerk  
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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**

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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.**



**FQA Board member Margo Gulati surveys the ongoing transformation.**



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

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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.**



**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.**



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



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



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



**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 [FQA 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.**