

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by BLAKE MCKELVEY, *City Historian*

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## **The Visual Arts in Metropolitan Rochester**

By BLAKE MCKELVEY

Fifteen years have slipped by since the publication by this journal of "The First Century of Art in Rochester." I carried the story in that article down to 1925 when the Memorial Art Gallery after a decade of growth was undertaking its first expansion. So many developments have occurred in local art fields in recent years, including a second major expansion of the gallery, that it seems appropriate to bring the story up to date. Perhaps, as one critic has recently lamented, "Rochester has not produced a single great artist in the last fifty years," and yet the city's increased interest in and practice of the graphic and other visual arts are evident on every side. Indeed the intensity of the controversies that have erupted in this field and the wide repercussions they occasioned are manifestations of the growing importance of art in the community. Not only has the number participating in the various fields of graphic expression mounted several fold, but new institutions, too, have appeared, and the size of their audiences and the scope of their coverage have greatly expanded. And although the new diversity of tastes has seemed to some observers to represent a relaxation or positive decline in standards, the excitement brought to the social scene by rival art groups reveals the emergence of a vital new dimen-

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sion in community life.

### **Springtime**

The years from 1925 to 1945 can aptly be characterized as the springtime of the arts in Rochester. Many new developments occurred as old and deeply imbedded traditions gave forth new shoots, and much freshly planted seed produced a verdant growth. Under the leadership of Miss Gertrude Herdle, who had succeeded her father as director in 1922, the Memorial Art Gallery more than doubled its facilities with the opening late in 1926 of its new addition (a gift of Mr. and Mrs. James S. Watson) which harmoniously extended the depth of the original building donated in 1912 by Mrs. Watson. Although the funds available for its operation never seemed adequate for its needs and opportunities, increasing numbers of amateur and professional artists and supporting members participated in its affairs. Never designed as a repository for all the community's art interests, the gallery lent encouragement to the older Art Club and to several new groups that developed independent art centers in these years. And when the blighting effects of the depression threatened the welfare of individual artists as well as that of their supporting institutions, the gallery was able, largely because of the dedication of its staff, to maintain an unflinching leadership.

Fortunately the lean years of the 1930's had been preceded by the prosperous late twenties. The gallery's expanded facilities, dedicated on November 9, 1926, included two rooms for art classes for children, over a thousand of whom were drawn into its programs in the first month of operation. In order to help finance its transformation from a "gazing gallery" to a teaching institution, the gallery launched a membership drive late in 1926, which enrolled 1765 members and produced a cash total of \$38,000. Miss Herdle added three new assistants to the staff and resumed the program of monthly exhibits to supply a continuing flow of attractions. For its annual exhibit of local art the

gallery determined in 1927 to engage the services of three out of town judges in order to assure an impartial selection of the works displayed. While some members of the Rochester Art Club, which had previously managed that show, were disgruntled by the gallery's assumption of full responsibility, most artists were delighted by the increased distinction a showing of their works now conferred, and the club was ready in November 1929 to open its own art center in the old Third Ward.

To stabilize and strengthen its services the gallery needed to build up its permanent collection, which at the start had consisted chiefly of a few European paintings from the walls of local patrons and several works by outstanding American realists acquired as purchase gifts. Again the James Sibley Watsons stepped forward to provide some of its most valuable acquisitions—an Italo-Byzantine painting on wood of the "Madonna and Child," a 14th Century work presented in December 1926, two rare Gothic tapestries in April 1928, and a year and a half later a third one, a Flemish masterpiece depicting "The Judgment of the Emperor Otho III" which had once been in the possession of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to hang permanently in the Gallery's Fountain Court where many of its social functions took place. Mrs. Watson also presented a 14th Century French sculpture of the "Madonna and Child," and Mr. C. Herbert Ocumpaugh presented his collection of Egyptian and Eastern-Mediterranean antiquities ranging in date from predynastic to early Christian times. Other local donors made noteworthy gifts, and 108 subscribers joined forces at one time to raise a fund to enable the gallery to purchase three bronze sculptures by Ivan Mestrovic of Yugoslavia.

An extension program, launched in 1926 during the expansion of the gallery building, was the forerunner of a more active educational program. The eight exhibitions held in the corridors of the Eastman School of Music and the special exhibits at the Women's City Club and at the Rochester Exposition stirred a broader interest in art interpretation. This brought numerous

invitations for lectures before school classes and special groups and increased the attendance at the regular gallery lectures in its newly provided auditorium. The education department was expanded in 1928 to include all instructional work with children and adults, both in the appreciation of art and in its actual practice. Miss Blanca Will, the gallery's instructor in modeling, was the 1930 recipient of the Lillian Fairchild award given annually by the University of Rochester in memory of the daughter of one of its distinguished professors. Members of the gallery staff, which now numbered twelve, gave a total of 265 art lectures to children and adults that year helping to boost the annual attendance at the gallery to 86,000, a record which it quickly surpassed the next year.

In spite of the onset of the depression, 1929-30 proved to be a banner year in every respect. The director's annual report emphasized three significant advances—in the acquisition of choice new treasures, in the expansion of the educational program, and in the mounting attendance at all functions. A gift by Mrs. Charles H. Babcock of a life-size figure in limestone of St. Mary Magdalen extended the gallery's Gothic collection back into the 13th Century. Mrs. Babcock also presented a charming pastel by Degas, equipping the gallery with a preeminent example of French impressionism, while a gift by the Watsons of eight objects of Chinese, Siamese, and Cambodian art dating from the 7th Century provided the nucleus for a new department of Far Eastern art. The Education Department (now under the direction of Miss Mabel T. Wright and separated from the Department of Art Instruction, which included five full-time instructors who conducted 16 weekly classes in drawing, painting and modeling) inaugurated a voluntary program for high school students, continued its service to the grammar schools, and ventured into the new field of radio with 27 scheduled art talks. Of the ten special exhibitions, one in December launched the new Rochester International Salon of Photography, which helped to swell the total attendance at the gallery to 92,150 people.

The gallery began to feel the chilling effects of the depression in 1931 when curtailment in its school programs and a drop in the membership payments brought a decline as well in the attendance. Forced by a tight budget to reduce its expenditures, the gallery enlisted the services of a volunteer committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. Thomas G. Spencer to assemble examples of American made furniture from Rochester homes for an exhibit of nine period rooms depicting domestic life in America from the late 17th to the early 19th Centuries. That exhibit in February not only attracted over 20,000 visitors to the gallery but also demonstrated the artistic appreciation of many residents for the domestic artifacts of their American antecedents. Although the gallery maintained and actually increased its attendance that year, despite a drop in memberships, the continued decline in membership fees forced a further curtailment in 1933, reducing the exhibits from ten to eight and cutting salaries and other outlays proportionately. To offset these retrenchments Gertrude Herdle, who that year became Mrs. Moore, had brought her sister Isabel, with a Masters in Art from the Fogg Museum at Harvard, back from the De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco in 1932 to serve as her assistant and share her salary.

In spite of the trials of the depression Rochester would not forget its Centennial, and the gallery with other local institutions participated in a series of events and programs in 1934 that brought a resurgence of interest. The gallery made its contribution by an exhibit in its rooms of "A Century of Rochester Interiors," which attracted a constant stream of visitors from May to September and boosted the attendance for the year to 98,500. Exhibits, consisting of several rooms of a composite "House of 1834" and other rooms of the Late Empire and Victorian periods, were prepared by volunteer committees who assembled appropriate items from local homes and recreated the domestic atmosphere of several eras in Rochester's history.

Revitalized by the response to the Centennial, the gallery

battled during the late thirties to maintain and expand its programs. Although the income from memberships and other sources slumped during the depression, the gallery slowly increased the number of its members and ventured to undertake new services. As assistant director Miss Isabel Herdle supplied leadership early in 1939 in organizing and supervising a Federal Arts Project for the W.P.A. in the Rochester area. To broaden its regional coverage the gallery assembled nine special art exhibits that year for circulation by its extension division to libraries and schools in seven nearby towns, and a year later the gallery transformed its annual exhibit of local art into the Finger Lakes Exhibition, opening it to participation by artists resident in 22 regional counties. To improve communications with its members and friends the gallery launched a monthly bulletin "Gallery Notes" in 1937 and the next year celebrated its own 25th anniversary by a review of the progress achieved and the new responsibilities assumed since its opening in 1913.

The gallery was also increasing its coverage of the art of all ages. Its permanent collections had grown in 25 years from 14 to 1540 accessions, promoting their classification into five distinct fields; its library had acquired 6400 books, 8500 photographs and 13,000 slides; its staff had increased from 4 to 19 and in 1938 conducted 26 weekly classes for 600 art students of all ages and reached 27,750 people in gallery talks and illustrated lectures. Over the years its exhibits had featured art treasures from 39 ethnic cultures, including those of the Near and Far East, Africa, and South America as well as the several ages and many strands of the culture of the Western world. Several of its shows had displayed the works of such "Precursors of Modern Art" as El Greco, Daumier, Monet and Renoir, and one exhibit had boldly traced the impact through successive generations of such "Rebels in Art," as the show was named, as Corot, Millet, Degas and Cezanne.

The gallery's broadening horizons had aroused some criticism, which stimulated the development of independent efforts in this

field. The Art Club, comprising most of the city's established artists, maintained its separate Art Center where the members gathered to display and discuss their works and occasionally to poke fun at what some regarded as the slap-dash products of the modernists. The club was forced to move from its South Washington Street center in 1937 (at first into a new center on Park Avenue and later into the Woodside headquarters of the Rochester Historical Society on East Avenue) when the Mechanics Institute acquired its old building and launched an exhibit program of its own in the nearby Bevier building as an outlet for its new Department of Applied Arts under the direction of Clifford M. Ulp, a former club president. With the opening in 1936 of the Rundel building of the Rochester Public Library, the city had acquired still another facility for art exhibits. Ralph Avery, a recent graduate of the institute and current president of the Art Club, became the first director of the Rundel gallery in that building and welcomed the annual club exhibits to its hall. Weekly art columns by Amy H. Croughton in the *Times-Union* gave the exhibits of these smaller galleries almost equal billing with those of the Memorial Art Gallery, which however were more adequately described by Miss Isabel Herdle who now wrote a regular column on art for the *Sunday Democrat & Chronicle*.

The gallery in fact welcomed the increased opportunities for art expression and display in Rochester. It stimulated the formation of the Print Club, housing its annual exhibits, and it fostered the development of an Art Fellowship, which responded to an invitation from Dr. Howard Hanson to exhibit their works in the Eastman School corridors during the annual Festival of American Music. The gallery continued its sponsorship of the Federal Arts Project, now under the direction of Eric H. Krause, and in December 1937 staged an exhibit in its halls of some of the works of the twelve participating artists. It launched a movie program on alternate Mondays to show films borrowed from the Museum of Modern Art. And early in 1939 the gallery

announced the receipt of a \$365,000 bequest from the estate of Hannah G. Gould with the purchase of El Greco's "Apparition of the Virgin to St. Hyacinth," thus launching a more vigorous acquisition program. It seized an opportunity in January 1941 to hang a special Van Gogh exhibit sent to America by the Netherlands Government to stimulate war relief efforts, and welcomed other European exhibits held over in America by the war. Its Finger Lakes shows accepted the works of Rochester servicemen, and as a result the 1941 exhibition displayed a greater range in talent and viewpoints than any earlier one. Two years later the gallery assembled a special show of Service Men's Art, and the next year it featured the first of a new series of Homelands Exhibits displaying the artifacts Rochester's Ukrainians had brought from the mother country.

The gallery's determination to reach and involve all segments of the community was evident in the wide participation of artists in its programs. If some of the older artists who had helped in the 1920's to launch the gallery now congregated more frequently at the Art Club's headquarters, the gallery held examples of their work in its permanent collections and drew them repeatedly back to see its exhibits. John J. Inglis, president of the Art Club in its 50th year and his 70th, had contributed several landscapes to the gallery's collection; Carl Peters, first winner of the Lillian Fairchild Award in 1924, and Edward S. Siebert, the last survivor of an earlier generation, were not only represented in its archives, but also on the walls of Rochester homes and institutions. A host of younger artists were vying for a place in the Finger Lakes shows and in the gallery's collection. Some, like Ralph H. Avery, whose oils and water colors of Rochester scenes had won national favor, and John C. Menihan, a self taught portrait painter of distinction, were noted for their skill at capturing the atmosphere and details of their local subjects; others like Hilda Altschule Coates and Lola Konraty won praise for the expressive rendering, in oil and clay respectively, of their own moods and phantasies as artists. Other Roches-

terians were winning acclaim in New York and elsewhere—Norman Kent for his woodcuts and James D. Havens for his oils and wood engravings. Each of these younger artists won the Fairchild Award in his turn, as well as occasional Finger Lakes prizes, while others such as Douglas Gorsline, Fred T. Bennett, and Robert Reiff won prizes not only in the Finger Lakes exhibits, but in those of New York as well. Samuel Provenzano, who as a lad had received his introduction to art in gallery classes, had returned after extensive study in the East and abroad and was painting in the abstract expressionistic style he had acquired under Hans Hoffmann in New York. These and other resident and former Rochesterians were meeting increased competition locally as the Finger Lakes Exhibits drew a more active participation from Ithaca, Syracuse, and other parts of its broad region.

### **Summer Harvests**

The first hot blast of summer came in 1945 when the out-of-town jury for the Finger Lakes exhibit awarded the Art Patrons Purchase Award to "The Fish," an abstract painting by Zoute (Leon Salter of nearby North Rose). The controversy that erupted over that award sharpened the division between the realists and the expressionists, as the traditionalists and the modernists were sometimes described, but it also brought a host of curious citizens into the gallery, some for the first time. The gallery had in the late thirties clarified its ties to the university, developing a cooperative relationship with its department of fine arts, under Professor Carl Hersey, and it again expanded its services to the public. The Mechanics Institute likewise strengthened its art departments and several new art clubs made their appearance. The popular interest in various types of graphic expression justified the appointment of art critics by both daily papers and encouraged the establishment of new commercial galleries and the scheduling of open-air art shows as annual summertime features. In the prosperous fifties more citizens

than ever before acquired original paintings and other works of art for their private enjoyment.

The heated debate over "The Fish" was a turning point in Rochester's art history. Some proud fishermen, who dropped in to inspect it, left in bafflement, and Elmer Messner, who later won a Fairchild Award for his cartoons, ridiculed it. But several artists rose to its defense, including Corporal Robert Reiff, home on a furlough, who wrote "Don't try to understand it. . . . Modern art just is." The gallery scheduled an illustrated lecture on modern art by Ralph M. Pearson of New York who received an attentive hearing, and a year later, when the gallery hung a national exhibit of "Paintings of the Year" sponsored by the Pepsi-Cola Company, many viewers remarked on the number of modernists included. So many advocates of expressionism spoke out, that Harwood B. Dryer, current president of the Art Club, felt impelled to send an article to the *Times Union* in January 1948 assuring the public that "You Don't Have to Like Modern Art."

The increased excitement over art boosted the attendance at the gallery over the 100,000 mark for the first time in 1946/47 when 1004 children and adults enrolled in its weekly art classes. As a demonstration of the social value of artistic expression, members of the gallery staff conducted special classes in creative art sponsored by the Council of Social Agency's Neighborhood Services unit at School No. 9, at Baden and Lewis Streets Settlement houses, and at the Veterans Hospital in Canandaigua. For its Homelands exhibit that year the gallery enlisted the cooperation of residents from Holland in the collection and display of its arts and crafts. And in a further effort to broaden its local contacts the gallery, which, a decade before, had developed a lending program among university students and faculty, extending it to all gallery members in 1941, now cooperated with Baden Street Settlement in placing color reproductions for three-week periods in the homes of the poor residents of the 7th ward.

Eager to promote all forms of artistic expression the gallery

gave increased attention in 1948 to handicrafts and lithography. It also seized the opportunity during a renovation of the Eastman house that year to stage the first public exhibit of the paintings George Eastman had collected over the years and which, bequeathed to the university, had hung since his death in 1932 on the walls of the mansion that served as the residence of the university president. A membership drive, the first in several years, brought in over 600 new members in April and boosted the total almost to 3000, thus assuring more adequate support. As a result the gallery was able that summer to offer a selection of vacation classes for both children and adults.

The Art Club, too, enjoyed a new burst of vitality, especially in summertime. Its earlier practice of staging an occasional outing at a nearby village became a monthly feature in the summer of 1949. The first outing of the season drew 35 members with their paints and brushes to Pultneyville where after several hours of work they hung their products at the Fire Hall and enjoyed a picnic supper. Although the annual Art Club shows, generally held in these years at the Rundel gallery, seldom in the forties displayed traces of modernism, by 1951 the situation was changing and Norman Nairn in covering the show for the *Democrat* commented on the great variety it displayed, including "some moderns."

As the Art Club was becoming more tolerant of various art styles, the traditionalists found a new haven in the Genesee group. Originally called the Rationalists, the group adopted its less combative name in 1948 to avoid charges of bigotry. Its annual shows at the Rundel gallery and occasional exhibits at Woodside and elsewhere won favor from those who preferred representational pictures and promoted the sale of the works of its more talented members, notably Ralph Avery and John Menihan, who also won frequent prizes at the Finger Lakes shows in these years. Some of the modernists, seeking more frequent opportunities for a display of their works, formed a committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. Evelyn Segal to select and

hang changing exhibits on the walls of the Hochstein School during the Arena theater-in-the-round performances there.

Fortunately the muted hostilities between the Genesee and Arena groups were dissipated by the timely arrival in 1950 of the School of American Craftsmen. Brought to Rochester by the Rochester Institute of Technology (as Mechanics Institute had been renamed in 1944) to strengthen its arts programs, this group of talented craftsmen from Alfred University (originally from Dartmouth) included several artists of distinction who quickly won recognition and admiration from all factions. One of their number, Franz Wildenhain, trained at the Bauhaus in Weimar, captured several prizes for his ceramics at the Finger Lakes Exhibitions, received the Fairchild award in 1953, and regularly entered his works in Arena shows. Stanley Witmeyer, head of the Institute's revitalized Fine Arts Department and a member of the Genesee group, worked closely with these newcomers.

It was not long before students and early graduates as well as the faculty of the School of American Craftsmen began to enter the various local shows and to capture some of the prizes. The Finger Lakes exhibit in May 1952 reflected this wider participation. The jury chose 323 out of the 1031 works submitted, and in the opinion of Jean Walrath, the new art critic for the *Democrat & Chronicle*, the modernists clearly predominated. When one conservative viewer protested, in a letter to the editor, that the show had lost its local character, Miss Herdle replied giving a list of more than a score of Rochester's leading artists who were again represented in the exhibit. One of the judges, Morris Kantor of the New York Art Student's League, assured Miss Walrath that "Rochester's show does not take a back seat to any he has judged in Cleveland or Chicago."

The gallery demonstrated its hospitality to all schools by hanging a Grandma Moses show that year and by opening its rooms to a Retrospective Exhibition of the Rochester Art Club in celebration of its 75th anniversary. After viewing the show

Virginia Jeffrey Smith, the new art critic on the *Times-Union*, declared in a burst of nostalgia "One would well imagine himself in Powers' Parlors where so many of the early shows were set. Modern painting in that setting would be fantastic, but most of these (paintings of the early members of the club) are so in keeping with the peace and serenity of that vanished age that they seem to thrive in the midst of distractions. For . . . there is much here that time cannot tarnish."

One gallery exhibit of 1952 had an unexpected bonus when two Lithuanian refugees, formerly close friends but long separated, suddenly encountered each other at a Homelands exhibit that March. As each proved to be a talented artist, the gallery hastened the next year to hang an exhibit of their works under the appropriate caption "Reunion in Rochester." Both Louis Vilimus and Alfonsas Dargas soon captured Finger Lakes prizes, and the latter would win the Fairchild award in 1961. Other refugees and newcomers from abroad likewise received a welcome to Rochester's art circles—Madeleine Stanley from France, Giovanni Pollizzi from Sicily, Svetozar Radacovic from Yugoslavia, to mention three who won several prizes.

The enthusiastic response to the successive homelands exhibits, especially to the display of their handicrafts, prompted the gallery to plan a show that would bring out a similar array of early American handiwork. To give it a regional focus, Miss Herdle suggested the theme of the Erie Canal, which promptly won acceptance and brought a host of volunteers to the gallery's assistance. Special committees found and assembled appropriate articles for the boat and other related scenes reconstructed in the gallery's rooms for the "Erie Canal—Thruway of Yesterday" exhibit opened early in October 1953. Continued through November, it attracted 40,000 visitors and boosted the gallery's attendance to 113,000 for the year.

Convinced that art can be gay and exciting, today as in the past, the gallery took a bold step in July 1955 when it moved the annual exhibit of its children's classes outdoors to attract pop-

ular attention. The enjoyment of those who came to see the 800 paintings on the gallery grounds was so evident that the gallery, responding to the urgent pleas of Miss Edna Weeks Smith, an art teacher on its staff, ventured two years later to stage a Clothesline Exhibit for adults as well. The 100 artists who entered that two-day show not only netted a modest return from their sales, shared with the gallery as sponsor, but launched an exciting new annual event that has won increasing popularity and promoted the wider distribution of original works of art in Rochester homes.

The city had long been supplied with commercial art galleries and studios, several of which promoted the sales of local artists by one-man exhibits and other showings. One of the most prestigious was the Broadhead gallery on lower East Avenue where for example Ralph Avery received a one-man show in 1940. Mrs. Jacquelin Schuman established a more imaginative private gallery in the old Henry Stern mansion further out East Avenue in 1961 featuring the works of local as well as out-of-town artists with dramatic openings and other showings in a sophisticated setting. Several craftsmen associated with the School of American Craftsmen joined in 1952 in the formation of Shop One, an outlet for the sale of their products and other handicrafts of modern design, which soon found a home in a garage loft on Troup Street in the old Third Ward.

So many art groups and institutions had appeared in the city, some with overlapping if not conflicting objectives, that it seemed desirable to create a unifying organization to coordinate their efforts. After some preliminary discussion representatives of a dozen art groups gathered at the gallery and formed the Arts Council in October 1957. Evelyn Segal, formerly the chairman of the Arena group, supplied leadership in launching the council and became the first chairman on its formal incorporation the next March. The Arts Council enrolled in addition to the Arena group, the Genesee group and the Art Club, the Art Directors Club, the Print Club, the Rochester Society of Archi-

fects, and the Landmarks Society of Western New York, as well as the Memorial Art Gallery, the Rundel gallery of the Public Library, the School of American Craftsmen at the Rochester Institute of Technology, the Department of Fine Arts at the University which the year before had opened a "Little Gallery" in a convenient nook in the basement of Rush Rhees Library, and finally the newly established Shop One. Dedicated to the promotion of a wider support for the arts, it displayed an interest in the architectural plans for the new Civic Center and for Midtown Plaza and launched an effort to list significant landmarks throughout the city, stimulating the Landmarks Society, the Society of Architects, and the city to undertake beautification programs in these fields that merit fuller treatment in a later article. In the more limited field of the visual arts the Arts Council provided an opportunity for the continuing discussion of plans and aspiration among the leaders of the several institutions that were preparing to launch dramatic new efforts in the sixties.

### **A Decade of New Beginnings**

The vitality of Rochester's growth brought new outcroppings of the visual arts throughout its expanding metropolitan region. New art clubs mushroomed in the suburbs, new art centers developed at three area colleges, and several new public and private art galleries made their appearance. A few courageous industrialists and bankers vied with the trustees of several cultural institutions in commissioning artists to create permanent works for public display at the entrances to their new buildings. The teachers and students at the old and new art schools swelled the ranks of the applicants for acceptance in the annual Finger Lakes Exhibitions and other shows. To maintain its leadership the Rochester gallery brought several distinguished exhibits each year, launched two popular new programs, and finally faced up to the urgent need to expand its facilities.

The decade opened on a somber note with news of the passing in the summer of 1960 of William Ehrich, long the leading instructor in art at the gallery, followed a few months later by the announcement of the impending retirement of Mrs. Moore, its director for four decades. The gallery honored Bill Ehrich, as he was affectionately known, by opening its fall season with a one-man exhibit of his sculpture and pottery assembled from numerous homes and galleries in Rochester and Buffalo where he had been associated with the Albright Gallery before coming to Rochester in 1938 as the teaching head of the sculpture department at the gallery and later at the university as well. When, a year after that exhibit, Mrs. Moore announced her intention to retire, the gallery joined with her many friends in a testimonial luncheon in her honor which overflowed the main hall at the Chamber of Commerce and brought expressions of appreciation from educators and businessmen as well as from artists and admirers who testified to the new interest in art she had created in Rochester.

Fortunately the gallery was able to fill these gaps in its staff with able appointments that brought new leadership. Harris King Prior, director of the American Federation of Arts in New York City and formerly director of the Munson-Williams Proctor Institute and Museum in Utica, came to Rochester as the new director of its gallery in September 1962. With a background of graduate study in art at Harvard, Yale, the University of Paris, and New York University, and with an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the California College of Arts and Crafts, he brought a fresh viewpoint and wide experience to the task in Rochester. But as a former judge of one of the Finger Lakes shows he was fully aware of the vitality of the gallery's local tradition and hastened to persuade Miss Isabel Herdle to continue as Assistant Director, with Mrs. Moore serving as an occasional consultant. Mrs. Moore had two years before brought Archibald Miller from Canada to become the new instructor of sculpture at the gallery and a member of the fine arts depart-

ment at the university. Under Prior's direction the gallery staffed a "Creative Workshop" with the part time services of talented local artists. Dean Harold Brennan of the Rochester Institute of Technology, had previously brought several artists to the city, notably Frans Wildenhain in ceramics, Kurt K. Fuerherm in painting, John Prip, the silversmith, and Karl Laurell the weaver—each of whom had won a Fairchild Award during the fifties. Other able teachers of art included Fritz Trautman, instructor of painting for almost three decades at the gallery, Leonard Barkin, Norman Bates, Donald Bujnowski, and Tage Frid all at the R.I.T., and Richard Hawver and Joe Aloï who also taught in the gallery's creative workshop program.

These and other art instructors in the city and many of their students competed for admission to the annual Finger Lakes exhibits boosting the participants in 1966 to 523. William F. Sellers, formerly instructor in sculpture at R.I.T. and at the University of Rochester, won the show's top award for an abstract composition in steel, described by Miss Walrath as a "triumph of balance" in a show that displayed a "flare of vitality." Other teachers at the new art centers developed by the expanding state colleges at nearby Brockport and Geneseo submitted works to the Rochester shows (Jack Wolsky at the former and Bertha Lederer at the latter had both won Finger Lakes prizes) and also scheduled exhibits by Rochester artists in their new galleries. Sister Mary Magdalin, director of the new Art Center opened at Nazareth College in October 1967, invited art groups in Rochester to make use of its facilities, too, an opportunity that attracted immediate popularity partly because of the architectural charm of the setting.

While I have reserved architecture for treatment in a later article, something must be said here of the examples of out-door sculpture and other art forms on public view. The murals by Ezra Winter, Barry Faulkner and others in the Eastman Theater (1922) had inspired similar efforts in the thirties by W.P.A.

artists in several high school auditoriums and elsewhere. The American Eagle, designed and rendered in bronze by Paul Jennewein of New York after a wide contest and erected in the Franklin Square circle in 1941 as a monument to the Spanish-American War veterans, had not attracted full praise until remounted on a higher pedestal on the river plaza of the Community War Memorial in 1960. A fresh new interest in this form of art developed with the unveiling in 1959 of the ceramic mural designed and installed by Frans Wildenhain in the lobby of the new building of the R. J. Strasenburg Co. on Jefferson Road. That symbolic interpretation of the company's pharmaceutical specialty, hailed by Virginia Smith as "a stupendous conception of creative vision," won its designer a second Fairchild award and prompted other businessmen to undertake similar embellishments.

The 1960's have brought several noteworthy contributions in this field. John Menihan's colorful panel in the new Security Trust building at the corner of East Avenue and Main Street shares that central location and its constant exposure to countless throngs with the soaring sculptural form of James Johnston's Liberty Pole erected in 1965 after a state-wide competition by the city's Urban Renewal Department in collaboration with neighboring property owners. If, like "The Fish," the Liberty Pole has stirred controversy, it has also won praise for Rochester in other cities and has spurred the erection of other imaginative art forms in Rochester, such as the example of kinetic sculpture executed by Harry Bertoia of Chicago for the new Eastman Kodak lobby on State Street and the reinforced concrete sculpture by Archibald Miller erected in front of the new tower dormitories on the River Boulevard, which earned its creator the 1966 Fairchild award. Worthy contributions of public art have enhanced the interiors of several new churches and synagogues, and several institutions have projects afoot in this field, but the most spectacular accomplishment is that on the new R.I.T. campus where a monumental bronze by Henry Moore,

a stainless steel sculpture by Jose deRivera, three bronze tree boxes by Harry Bertoia, two murals by Joseph Albers, and several other art objects have attracted wide acclaim. Finally the unveiling of the stainless steel sculpture "Three Forms" by Roy Gussow of New York in the Xerox Square provides dramatic new evidence downtown of Rochester's interest in art.

In the midst of these exciting developments the gallery was pressing forward with its campaign for expansion. First it seemed necessary to demonstrate the quality of the exhibits it could bring to its walls. In collaboration with four other regional museums it assembled an exhibit of the works of "Rediscovered Painters of Up State New York" in 1958 and the next year featured the handicrafts and other details of a Dutch farmhouse in the Hudson Valley. Again in collaboration with the Munson-Proctor Museum, Harris Prior's former stand in Utica, the gallery assembled an exhibit of "Masters of Landscape: East and West," which compared the works of Japanese and Indian artists dating from the 13th Century with some in the West from the 15th Century and down in both cases to the 20th Century. Finally in 1965, shortly before it closed for expansion, the gallery presented "A Look at Realism in Art from the Renaissance to the Supermarket" in a dramatic exhibit called "In Focus."

Despite its rich potential and the vigor of its staff and citizen backers, the gallery's drive in September 1963 fell far short of its goal. With only \$1,342,000 in pledges, it was necessary drastically to modify its plans, but after considerable delay a new plan was adopted and construction commenced on September 12, 1966, with Mrs. James S. Watson Jr. wielding the spade in groundbreaking ceremonies. In preparation for the complete renovation of the existing building and the construction of its new addition, the gallery had to be emptied of its art treasures and closed to the public throughout 1967. But the staff, reluctant to suspend public services, managed in the midst of the upheaval to develop two popular new programs.

The first and most obvious innovation was the expansion of

its extension program. Some exhibits were placed in local stores and halls; others were prepared for tours to distant galleries. In conjunction with the City School District and backed by a grant from the federal government, under the Elementary and Secondary School Act, the gallery equipped an Artmobile and despatched it daily to public and parochial schools throughout the community, carrying a taste of art more directly and more widely to city children than ever before. Classes were organized and conducted in convenient places, including Cutler Union next door on University Avenue, so that this program too was maintained.

But the most dramatic new development was the gallery's plan to take some at least of its members on visits to the great centers of art abroad. Affluent Rochesterians had been touring Europe each summer for more than a century and in increasing numbers since the Second World War. Most of them had no doubt visited its galleries, and as I have noted in an earlier article the first art collections in Rochester were the product of such tours by Hiram Sibley, Daniel Powers, and other citizens who brought back costly selections from its abundant store of art treasures. Most of the local artists of that early period and many of the last half century spent months, even years, in art study in Europe and few if any failed to make repeated trips abroad. Mrs. Moore and Miss Herdle were no exceptions, as each made more than a dozen trips to Europe and returned to enrich their gallery talks with slides and graphic descriptions of the art of the French Romanesque churches, the Spanish pilgrimage roads, the Italian hill towns and many other places they visited separately or together. Virginia Smith had for over a decade reported in her weekly *Times-Union* columns on the galleries and cathedrals visited in summer tours to Western Europe and the Mediterranean. With such preparation it was not difficult in 1967 when the gallery was closed for expansion, to recruit a plane load of members eager to join the first conducted tour through the hill towns of Italy. So successful was

that tour that the gallery scheduled a second and larger flight to Spain the next year, as well as one to Mexico and Yucatan, and then still another to Greece as the excitement of these conducted tours mounted.

The realization that the study and appreciation of art could be an exciting experience was growing in Rochester as the reconstruction of its gallery progressed. Despite the drastic modification of its original expansion plans, the new designs, prepared by Waasdorp, Northrup & Kaelber of Rochester, began to stir comment and attract praise as observant citizens noted that the low eastern wing linking the elegant Italian Renaissance gallery with the 19th Century Gothic Cutler Union was achieving an unexpected sense of spatial harmony. Many citizens enjoyed a new thrill when they first drove around to the rear of the old gallery where a modern new front provided a spacious and inviting entrance to the much expanded gallery inside.

For the dedication of the expanded gallery in August 1968, Harris Prior had invited Rochester's three sister cities to send exhibits. He had visited Rennes, Caltanissetta and Wurzburg in turn that January, arranging for the shipment of choice representations of their art holdings, and the mayor and curator of Wurzburg came to Rochester for the opening. In addition to the international flavor thus achieved, the gallery displayed many of its permanent treasures in a fresh and more spacious setting that gave them a new charm and impact. The less formal arrangement of small contained spaces, alternating and linked by corridors with distant vistas that supplied stunning opportunities for the display of choice works of art, added excitement to a gallery visit, more than justifying the modest charge now requested of non members. For the first time the gallery had an opportunity to make a continuous but changing display of its own treasures as an enriching experience for visitors drawn in to see special exhibits in the upper galleries of the old building, which now seemed almost as new as the new wing.

The staff had more room available for special exhibits but

now, because of their location, these would have to stand comparison with the gallery's more adequately displayed permanent collections. This challenge was first experienced by the Finger Lakes Exhibit in 1969, and the judges, who reduced the number of acceptances, despite the greater space, reflected their awareness of the new situation. Other special exhibits that fully met the challenge included the "Light as Art" event, with its changing patterns of sound and flashing neon, and a notable exhibit of the works of the great Hudson River artist, Thomas Cole, organized and annotated by Howard S. Merritt of the Fine Arts Department at the university. Its showing at the gallery in February 1969 attracted many visitors and assured it an eager welcome on an extended tour. Another special exhibit that met the test was one displaying the works of Contemporary Black Artists brought to Rochester from Minneapolis in August 1969; to supply a local touch Luvon Sheppard, who had recently won first prize at the Joseph Avenue Curbside Art Show, gave repeated demonstrations of print-making at the gallery during the exhibit.

Of course the Clothesline shows did not have to face that test of standards, although the recently expanded gallery was open for inspection throughout that weekend for the first time in 1969. The Clothesline shows were responding to another challenge, that of the open-air exhibits, such as the annual sidewalk shows at East and Main in the middle and late sixties and earlier exhibits on the River Plaza at the War Memorial, as well as frequent exhibits on the Mall in Midtown Plaza. Still another popular display was the annual "Festival of Religious Art," a Rochester project which attracted nation-wide participation in its juried shows that reached their tenth season in 1968 at the Central Presbyterian Church. The Clothesline shows competed too with an increasing number of private galleries that offered opportunities for the display and sale of the products of producing artists. Among the newer outlets of this sort were Wolfards on South Goodman, the Kravetz Fine Arts Gallery on Monroe,

Vlad Jejevics atelier on Clinton, and the Stern-Weber gallery on Park Avenue. Fears that the Clothesline show would suffer were dispelled in September 1969 when, despite early morning showers on both days, over 500 artists set up exhibits that attracted a record turnout of 52,000 visitors. Although the sales dropped slightly below the \$54,000 total of the previous year, the Clothesline exhibit again won acclaim as the largest and most successful non-juried open-air show sponsored by any gallery in the nation. A prominent feature of the Clothesline shows was the profuse and exciting display of artistic handicrafts, reflecting the distinction the School of American Craftsmen had brought to the Rochester area, which was now widely recognized as the country's most creative center of art handicrafts.

As a result of the increased popularity and informality of the art shows, and the active sales they promoted, the number of homes displaying original paintings or other works of art greatly increased. For many the collection of the works of favored artists became an expensive hobby and several acquired distinguished collections. It would be interesting to describe a few of these collections, of Renaissance paintings in one case, of Classical and Byzantine coins, of contemporary art, of modern sculpture, of rare prints, but any such listing would be incomplete and would invade and endanger the privacy of the collectors mentioned. Some of the leading collectors of an earlier day, William S. Kimball for example, made great efforts to protect their treasures from theft, and the recent experience of Eastman House, from which Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Young Man," a 300-year old masterpiece, was stolen in January 1968, re-emphasized the value art has attained in our society. Fortunately the stolen Rembrandt was recovered and, with most of the other paintings in the George Eastman collection, has been turned over to the gallery for display and safe keeping.

The gallery has greatly increased its permanent collections in recent years. Annual purchases under the Marion Stratton Gould fund and occasional purchases under the R. T. Miller fund

and the General Acquisition fund enabled the staff to fill gaps in its major collections and otherwise to strengthen its standing as a representative gallery of the art of all ages. Individual gifts have also steadily enriched the gallery's collections, notably in 1969 the anonymous gift of a major Cezanne painting, one of the most important single acquisitions in the gallery's entire history. At the same time the gallery has steadily increased its membership to 8600 for 1969 and boosted its attendance for the previous year to 175,000. Although its expenses likewise continued to rise, posing the hazard of an enforced curtailment of services if added revenues cannot be found, Rochester's continued prosperity, and the vitality of the interest in art through the metropolitan area, as the activity of a dozen suburban art clubs attests, lend assurance for the future. Indeed the Arts Council (which in 1967 had expanded to include the audio, the dramatic and the photographic arts, as well as the visual arts, covered in this article) engaged a part time director and in addition to its efforts to coordinate the various art programs lauded a move to secure the establishment of a Metropolitan Arts Resources Committee. The County Legislature has created such a committee headed by Andrew D. Wolfe who as chairman has announced its decision to sponsor a survey of the resources and structure of the community available for the support of its varied art interests. This survey, to be conducted by the Bureau of Municipal Research, should provide clear direction for the next stage in Rochester's development in the various fields of art.