

DID YA KNOW.....

“GALLERY 53”

On September 21, 1966 an item appeared in the Richmond News Leader, announcing “Gallery ‘66” at the First Unitarian Church at Floyd and Harrison. Their project theme *Art for the Home* was designed in conjunction with the Fan District garden tour to illustrate how sculpture can enhance outdoor spaces.

For an entry fee of 50 cents an exhibition of paintings, small sculpture and fine crafts by Richmond area artists, was on display in the basement Community Room of the church for sale at prices ranging from \$5.00 to \$100.00.

Eleanor Lawrence, chairperson of Gallery ‘66’, is remembered as a business woman, and artist and sculptor, teacher, women’s rights advocate and a devoted Unitarian. Bill Gold was our minister at the time: a man with a deep love for the Arts. Together, artist and minister began what was then *a little church project*. By 1968, the number of participating artists had more than doubled.

In 1970, Gallery moved across Floyd Street to Emerson House: described as “the perfect backdrop” for a variety of the art shows over the next two years. Serving as chairperson, Cary Odell organized not only Gallery, but monthly one-person shows, complete with opening receptions, invitations and sales. Selections from Bill Gold’s print collection were on exhibit for sale: we even had a prison art show.

Under the chairmanship of Donna McCown, Gallery ‘72 began with an opening night champagne reception in 1st Unitarian’s newly constructed building, at 1000 Blanton Avenue, designed by architect Ulrich Franzen. Its staggered walls and arrangement of windows created an excellent setting for a Gallery that has continued to grow in quality and reputation.

Gallery began with 22 artists, \$600 in sales and a donation of \$400 to the church fund. At Gallery’s 25th year, we changed from using the year to the anniversary number. Today, more than 4000 pieces of art contributed by more than 200 artists and the commitment of member volunteers have turned Gallery into a highly respected annual community event for Richmond’s art lovers.

Pat Vaughn

Other Gallery at First UU tidbits (by Rachel Lawrence):

- Jo Gruessing made jester hats for Gallery Directors and Co-Chairs to wear, identifying those who were in charge.
- We had an article done in 2013 in the Richmond Times Dispatch -
https://richmond.com/news/article_d8fa930f-2c55-57f8-bea2-4060e82b0cbf.html?_dc=914101210654.4746
- in 2019, we had two food trucks: Cafe 2 Go and Jiji's Frozen Custard - yum!
- Here's an article published in 2022 in Boomer Magazine:
<https://www.boormermagazine.com/gallery-at-first-uu-comes-alive/?fbclid=IwAR1Dzkm-6UxpF1pi1VHRSdNrYBtHiDnVasLlrJE1ZPwYqGjAl27FGA0EJ1k>
- Another article published in 2022 in Natural Awakenings:
<https://www.narichmond.com/2022/08/31/410452/55th-annual-gallery-at-first-uu-fine-arts-and-crafts-show>
- And another Article published in 2022 in Richmond Magazine -
<https://richmondmagazine.com/news/sunday-story/healing-art/>
- Gallery at First UU in 2022 was our return after a two-year hiatus due to the Covid Pandemic. We had shorter hours and no opening night reception. All were required to wear face masks. Despite this and the fact that fewer artists participated, the show was a success.