

Women's Art Registry of Minnesota

10 Tuesday Beginning of Ribbon Exhibition. Show continues to April 21.

28

17 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. WARM meeting. All members welcome. Discussion of the ribbon exhibition.

Wednesday, 7 p.m. Chris Marten's presentation, "Impressions of Art and Life in the Soviet Union".

25 Saturday, 7-10 p.m. Opening of the Women's Photography Invitational exhibition. Continued through May 26.

APRIL

1 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Associate Members Meeting.

5 Saturday, 9 a.m. Gallery Members Meeting.

14 Monday, 7:30 p.m. Shelley Rice speaking on "The Plight of Women Photographers in N.Y.C." MCAD auditorium.

15 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. WARM meeting. All members welcome. Discussion of photography Invitational Exhibition.

MAY

2 Saturday, 9 a.m. Gallery Members Meeting.

2 Saturday, 7-10 p.m. Opening of the Julia Barkley and Georgianna Kettler show. Continued through June 30.

5 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Associate Members Meeting.

19 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. WARM Meeting. All members welcome. Discussion of the Barkley/Kettler exhibition.

JUNE

CALENDAR 1979

MARCIA TUCKER, JANUARY 1979

Marcia Tucker came to Minneapolis in January as part of WARM'S Visiting Artists Program. She shared with me some ideas which I would like to pass on.

In discussing Tucker's preparation for curating a show and writing about an artist's work, Tucker said that she lives beside the artist for a number of months. The emphasis of "stepping into someone else's shoes" is to understand the art through the artist's experiences and environment, rather than through her/his words. She explained this as a participatory process, not one of mere observation. Tucker stressed that discussions during this time do not focus on the art work itself. When it is time to curate and hang the exhibition, Tucker makes the decisions without the artist at hand. In writing about the work, she develops relationships between the art and other disciplines such as literature, science and philosophy.

After thinking about this process, I found it much to my liking but unfortunately not very often practiced. To understand a certain individual's work, Tucker emphasizes the interrelationship between art, artists, observor and environment. She openly acknowledges that neither art nor artist are housed in a vacuum, dealing solely with the formal elements of art. In my estimation, artists today are not as concerned with "pure art" as were the previous decade, but curators and writers still seem preoccupied with this notion. As Tucker is part of the latter, she is unique in her concern.

Now that art is no longer talked about in art terms exclusively, it has become popular to view the work in relationship to the artist's personal experiences. I don't have any problem with this except hearing about them can be terribly boring and sometimes quite embarrassing. Often these events are used as a reason why a particular piece of art was made. It's a looking backwards process. (The exceptions happen when experiences are developed from an unusual perception or rise to a universal level.)

Tucker excluded the artist from active participation in the curatorial and writing processes. Being part of a collective gallery, I am expected to make art, hang exhibitions and, either verbally or in the written word, talk about art. The latter two I con myself into viewing as personally expanding and adding to my artistic development. The real reason I am asked and do these tasks is that there are not experts willing to take the responsibilities. Tucker has the expertise in these areas and takes the responsibility. Her not "consulting" the artist on installation and the writing first irritated me. But she persistently stated she could not give advice on developing or improving an artist's output. From that standpoint, should an artist expect to assist the work of a curator or a writer?

As I fumbled around for words to tell Tucker about my own work, she said it was not necessary for me to verbally explain it. I felt quite relieved. If I had tried a verbal translation, I probably would have given her my little talk on grids and linear elements and then told what traumas I've had lately.

Tucker obviously sees and hears about the personal side of an artist's life during her "life in" process. They do not, however, become the basis of her writing. She turns to other sources, a philosophical theory for example, to develop an idea. The art, in it's final stage, does not stand alone, but interrelates.

Beth Bergman

WARM'S Visiting Artist Program has been made possible by grants from the Dayton Hudson Foundation, Northwestern National Bank's Employees' Contribution Council, General Mills Foundation and the Minneapolis Foundation.



ARC EXCHANGE

The first exchange of exhibitions between WARM and a gallery outside the immediate region took place this winter. ARC Gallery, a women's collective located at 6 W. Hubbard Street in Chicago, showed the work of WARM artists Harriet Bart, Hazel Belvo, Joan Carlson, Cherie Doyle, Carole Fisher, Sandra Kraskin, Joyce Lyon, Jantje Visscher, and Mary Walker during January. ARC's space is somewhat smaller than ours, more urban, with the pulse of the city apparent. From mid-February through March, WARM exhibited work by ARC members Thelma Heagstedt, Irmfriede Hogan, Priscilla Humay, Janine Talat-Kelpsa, Carol McQueen, Barbara Metz, Jan Miller, Chris Millon, Margaret Peterson, Gail Simpson, and Marilyn Sward.

In addition to the obvious benefits of having our work seen by a wider audience and having the opportunity to see and to show work by women developing simultaneously but in a different location, many of us were able to meet and get to know members of the ARC cooperative. Harriet Bart, Mary Walker and I roared into Chicago in Mary's station-wagon crammed with work on what may have been the only non-blizzard weekend of the winter. We were met by four members of ARC, with whom there was immediately a great deal to talk about, sharing as we do the experience of being women artists trying to sustain a cooperative art organization. WARM was pleased to welcome Janine Talat-Kelpsa, Barbara Metz, Thelma Heagstedt, and Marilyn Sward to the opening here. I found great value in the meetings, in the experience. Which is not to deny the presence of some fuzziness in initial logistics, attributable perhaps to our not knowing each other yet. For myself, I do hope this is the first of a series of exchanges.

Joyce Lyon



Newsletter policy and staff

The WARM newsletter is a forum for the exchange of information and opinions of W.A.R.M. members. Articles represent the authors' own opinions, not necessarily those of the Registry.

The Newsletter Committee of WARM publishes the Newsletter. Members include: Beth Bergman, Susan McDonald, Susan Pleissner, Alice Towle, and Associate member Kathryn Lloyd.

The deadline for the September Newsletter is July 31. Anyone wishing to submit articles, announcements or advertisements is invited to do so. Please leave the material clearly marked for the Newsletter by the deadline indicated in the gallery, or contact one of the committee members to make special arrangements.



TELEPHONY

A poem by Anita Wallace

just imagine
if all the pushbutton telephones
got together
and played a symphony
a gala technological affair
dancing on fingertips
through yellow pages
with alexander graham bell
calling watson
come here

Julia Barkley

WARM Show, June, Downstairs Gallery

"Symbolist Art" These paintings are from mythology and the collective sub-conscious that reveal or suggest intangible truths or states. There will be a performance connected with one of the paintings - "Circles of Fire". It is a mourning with point, song, dance, poetry for the deaths of the nine million women* burned at the stake for witchcraft in the middle ages.

Julia Barkley

*Figure given by Mary Beth Edelson in lecture at St. Catherine College in 1978.

Georgianna Kettler

WARM show, June, Upstairs Gallery

"Lithographs, The Goddess Mounds Series"

These images were developed as a result of research into ancient sacred sites which were often chosen or constructed in such a way as to show a figural relationship with the landscape. Universal reverence for the mountain and its transformation into the burial mound and the temple are themes in the series.

Announcements about forthcoming exhibitions

Clouds and Daggers

Joi Hoagland-Mixed Media
Cynthia Packer - Recent Drawings

May 7th-31st The Guild of Performing Arts Gallery

Opening Reception Monday, May 12th
3:00 - 5:00

Cedar/Riverside Music & Refreshments

Lee Anne Dollison
Kathryn Lloyd
Maria Mazzara
Joan Rothfuss
Anita Wallace
Marilyn Zwak

June 11th-25th West Bank Gallery
Opening Reception Monday, June 11

3 7:30 p.m. University of Minnesota

WARM Associate Membership meetings are the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the WARM Gallery, 414 First Ave. North. Associate and Gallery members are welcome to come and participate.

The Steering Committee is made up of the following people. They may be contacted for help or information about Associate membership or meetings:

Lee Anne Dollison	871-0617
Joi Hoagland	871-4563
Kathryn Lloyd	824-8414
Cynthia Packer	822-1810
Barbara Reynolds	920-9424
Joan Rothfuss	871-0167
Anita Wallace	374-1986
Secretary	

Associate Membership
Second Quarter Agenda - 1979

May 1st

- A. Orientation: New Associate members to show slides
- B. Steering Committee Report
- C. Announcements

June 5th

- A. Continuation of slide presentations
- B. Open Discussion: Sharing of thoughts and ideas
- C. Steering Committee Report
- D. Announcements

July 3rd

- A. Slide/Tape Package Viewing "The American Abstract Artists: Women's Contribution to the Avant-garde of the '30's and '40's"
- B. Open Discussion
- C. Steering Committee Report
- D. Announcements

Judy Chicago's Dinner Party

Purposes of the Weekend

A year ago, Ms. Chicago sent out letters requesting women throughout the world to participate in an exhibition that would begin at the San Francisco Museum of Art on March 14th. A group of women, along with Ms. Chicago, assisted in making approximately thirty-nine place settings honouring thirty-nine different women using the Los Angeles Women's Building as their workshop. The various settings were achieved by weaving, crocheting, ceramics and other materials.

Saturday, March 10th the Associate group of WARM had a dinner party at Fran Belvin's house in celebration of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party Show. Internationally, women held dinner parties and sent in photographs, letters, and drawings documenting their events. These documents will travel with the show throughout the year.

We made a collective drawing, signed by everyone present, and sent it off to San Francisco. We consumed lots of delicious food-homemade vegetable soups, vegetarian mousaka, braided cheese brioche, several delicious fruit salads, and chocolate mint brownies. Fun was had by all, and it was a good night for getting to know one another.

WARM Associate Steering Committee
Report

A Women's Art Weekend!

Over the past two months the Steering Committee of the Associate Members of WARM has been meeting to plan a Women's Art Weekend. This event, which will deal with women's current involvement in art, will take place in September at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. It will be two days of discussions, workshops, slides and films. We hope to have the participation of women from all over the region, and are currently seeking funds from corporations and private citizens to finance this project.

- * To provide a setting for women in all the visual arts and crafts to come together to discuss ideas, goals, and problems we have in common, thereby taking the first step in establishing a women's art community.
- * To bring long deserved exposure to women working in all the visual arts.
- * To explore the herstory of women in art, both in general and in our region.
- * To discuss the struggle of all artists to gain recognition as vital contributors to society, focusing on the compounded difficulties we, as women artists, encounter in a male-dominated culture.
- * To explode myths and stereotypical roles, explore our identities as women artists.

We will be involving local and regional women's organizations as well as arts/crafts groups. Local professional artists will be invited to lead workshops and discussions.

We solicit your ideas for workshop and discussion topics. Some suggestions are:

- female imagery
- special concerns of Native American women artists
- special concerns of Black women artists
- herstory of women in art
- herstory of women of our region in art
- women's art organizations and galleries
- women in the crafts
- logistics of grant writing and organizing shows
- strategies for changing sexism in college programs
- women's art projects (Women's Building, Palace of the Goddess, the Dinner Party, etc.)
- individual artists talking about their work and lives

If you have any questions, ideas, time and/or energy, please contact Fran Belvin (722-0342), Lee Anne Dollison (871-0617), or Marg Rozycki (824-8996).

Gallery Members Teach Courses at MCAD

WARM Gallery members Jantje Visscher and Georgiana Kettler Cooper will be teaching courses at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design this Summer. Deadline for registration in these courses is June 1, 1979.

Jantje Visscher will be conducting a class in Silkscreen printing starting July 9 through the 17th. Georgiana Kettler Cooper will be teaching a Lithography course June 27th to July 6th. These courses are designed for both experienced and beginning students.

The courses may also serve as a prerequisite for the print workshops scheduled for August. Designed for people with basic printmaking knowledge, area artists may use the best print facilities in the state. Visscher, Cooper and Bob Batten will facilitate shop use in Silkscreen, Lithography, and Intaglio. If this pilot program meets enrollment, it can be continued by the college in the fall. Deadline for registration is July 16.

Georgiana Kettler Cooper is also teaching afternoon and evening courses in Watercolor Painting from June 18th to July 27th at the College. Registration deadline for these courses is June 1. For more information, please contact the extension program at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design 870-3065.

LIFE DRAWING WARM members Susan McDonald and Jantje Visscher are offering a life drawing studio every Tuesday afternoon, 1 to 4. For information call 378-9169 or 378-2571. They are considering starting a second life drawing session - please call if you are interested and have a time preference.

Impressions of Art and Life in the Soviet Union

Slide-Lecture Presentation:
by Chris T. Martens, Sculptor, Assistant
Professor, South Dakota State

W.A.R.M. Gallery
Wednesday, April 25, 1979, 7 P.M.

Chris Martens spent Spring semester, 1976, in the Soviet Union. Her lecture and slide presentation, "Impressions of Art and Life in the Soviet Union" is based on her experience as a foreign resident and artist in Leningrad. She presents Russian art from an historical perspective and discusses contemporary trends in both dissident and government approved art. Ms. Martens collected most of her material on Russian and "official" Soviet art in the Hermitage, the Russian Museum and at public art shows. Her information of dissident art was gathered by visiting the homes and studios of "unofficial" artists and by attending exhibits of "unofficial" art. "I made taped interviews while sitting in a park and hiding the tape recorder in a paper bag."

Donation at the door.

Awards

Two Minnesota arts funding agencies have announced the winners of their awards:

Bush Foundation - Visual Arts
Leif Brush
Steve Sorman
Tom Rose
Frank Gohlke
Don Celendar

Minnesota State Arts Board
Leif Brush - sculptor
Steve Sorman - painter, printmaker
Keith Gunderson - poet
John Hassler - novelist
Eric Stokes - composer

Slide Registry

The Slide Registry was widely used in 1978. Through the Registry several WARM group shows were organized, in Morris, Carleton, St. Benedicts and Winona. An exhibit in River Falls, Wisconsin has just opened. Several individuals have gotten shows through an initial Slide Registry contact. Some commissions have been made - such as the Caterpillar Co. commissioned works. There have also been a number of contacts for direct sales.

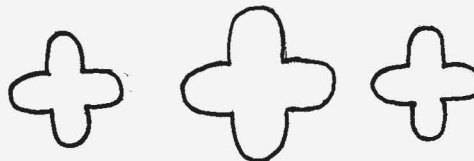
The WARM Slide Registry was used in 1978 as a resource for the slide tape packages. At least 40 WARM artists are featured in slide tapes. There were also about 30 lectures last year for which slides were borrowed. Some of these are - a conference in Superior, Wisconsin, a lecture at the Walker, Minneapolis Community Education, the Minneapolis College of Art & Design, University of Minnesota Women's Studies classes. This is a resource for us and for the community. You are welcome to borrow slides - follow the rules in the sign-out book at the Gallery.

The Slide Registry has now completed 6 slide-tape packages. They have been shown to numerous groups and classes. Some comments: "I have taken 2 art history classes at the U and never have we discussed women artists." That was a Women's Studies student at the U of Minnesota in 1978. "I was not really aware of women artists in the past." That was a first year MCAD student. "Women artists of the centuries past - you tend to know a lot less about that sort of thing. I guess I didn't realize that women were that active." Another first year MCAD student. WARM originally decided to make these tapes because of the lack of information about women artists - for example, in the Minneapolis Public Library, about 94% of the publications about individual artists are about male artists. We feel that these slide tape packages are just beginning to fill a gap in information about historical and contemporary women's art.

A "Finder's Fee" system has been started: If you make a contact which results in a slide tape package rental, you get \$5. The tapes rent for \$25.00. Pick up a flyer in the Gallery for more details. Jantje Visscher, the Slide Tape Coordinator, will handle the mailing of the tapes.

Published by COPIA, your finder's fee through her.

Please get your slides up to date and pay your Slide Registry dues for 1979. The slides of any member whose WARM and SR dues are not paid by MAY 1 WILL BE PULLED OUT OF THE SLIDE REGISTRY. SR dues are \$2.50



Response to Slide-Tape:

"The Non-Objective Tradition and Recent Women's Work"

Dear WARM,

We found the tape and slides very informative and relevant to our Museum's programs.

They were shown first to our own docents as an educational tool and then to the participants of the Docent Forum where about 160 museum volunteers and staff members had a chance to see them.

I found the comments about the artists interest in relating to the expanded understanding of perception particularly helpful in explaining the contemporary art to someone who comes in and wants to know where the "real pictures" are!

Thank you for sharing this excellent presentation with us.

Sincerely,

Ruth Ann Moore
Docent Chairman
San Jose Museum of Art

October 18, 1978



W.A.R.M. Hosts National Photography

Invitational - April 28 - May 26.

W.A.R.M. opens its national photography invitational on Saturday, April 28 with work by six photographers, including JoAnn Callis (Los Angeles), Judith Golden (Los Angeles), Elaine Mayes (Amherst, Mass.), Joyce Neimanas (Chicago), Marcia Resnick (N.Y.C.), and Ruth Thorne-Thomsen (Chicago). All of the artists teach at institutions in their respective cities, are well known in their geographic areas, and exhibit their work nationally. Neimanas, Golden, and Resnick are recent NEA recipients; Callis was awarded this year's Friends of Photography Ferguson grant. Resnick has published several books of her images, including most recently *Re-Visions*, and has exhibited in book art shows in France, Germany, Japan, and the U.S. Elaine Mayes, who teaches filmmaking and photography at Hampshire College in Amherst, taught photography a few years ago at the University of Minnesota.

The photographers were selected for their diversity in approach to the medium, and to materials, concepts, and content. Although a few of their images have been seen in this area (most at M.I.A.), their work is unfamiliar to most viewers in this area. Because very little of this very contemporary work has been published or written about, much less seen in this area, it is difficult and probably unfair to make generalizations about the work itself, but perhaps a few introductory remarks about each artists' work would help to characterize the exhibition.

Color is essential to JoAnn Callis' images for their sensual, sometimes erotic connotations. Her interior images are tense, impending, and non-verbal. To describe them is to lessen an essentially intuitive, emotive visual response. Judith Golden's images, also in color, are drawn from mass culture and its media. In a recent series on *People* magazine she uses herself as the people on the covers. Her past work, in its autobiographical transformation of roles, she says is about "the kind of masks we all wear and the kind of roles we -- especially women -- play in society.

She often embellishes the surface with colored pencil, crayon, stitching, and paint. Elaine Mayes works in the black and white 35mm tradition to pursue her observations of ironic, often humorous vestiges of everyday life. Often there is a sense of human presence, although physical evidence of personage is not included. Joyce Neimanas makes cultural, sometimes sexual references which integrate words and language into the context of photographic images. Her layers of meaning are enhanced by strokes of color, gestural drawing, photographs within photographs. Resnick works conceptually and autobiographically. In *Re-Visions* girlhood fantasies are absurd, humorous, witty. In one image, for example, a female head bends over to deliver a lascivious kiss to a Howdy Doody puppet; the caption reads "She secretly lusted for her television heroes." Ruth Thorne-Thomsen works with a pinhole camera using 4"x5" film to create fantasy situations out-of-doors that distort and play with space and scale. She uses the information in the real landscape or skyline (often Chicago) juxtaposed with objects that are singularly strong or referential to another time. Often antiquity (as in Greek statuary and Roman architecture). The images are printed both 4"x5" contact prints and large mural size.

Linda Gammell

Women in Photography

Photography for the past five years has experienced a tremendous upsurge in interest, partly due to artists' interest in drawing from and using photographic images, and in willingness on the part of galleries to show photographs. In an almost desperate desire to define what is going on in the medium (since it is so diverse), a few healthy controversies have been stirred up, particularly by Susan Sontag's book *ON PHOTOGRAPHY* and by John Szarkowski's (MOMA photography curator) attempt to codify photography's direction in the last 20 years in the exhibit "Mirrors and Windows" which is touring 7 cities in the U.S. and just finished a tour at the Walker Art Center. (Both Szarkowski's critical thesis and his choice of images were severely



Ruth Thorne-Thomsen, untitled, pinhole photograph (4"x5")

criticized). One of the issues that is kicked around, with no terrifically cogent conclusions, is why women as photographers fail sufficient representation in exhibitions (13% representation in "Mirrors and Windows"). Rationalizations run the gamut from the (worn) cliché that women produce intellectually weak, emotionally mushy work in the perceptions of male curators and tastemakers in positions of power, to a suggestion that there is a lack of aggressive insistence by women that their work be seen by the public (see Shelley Rice's article "Feminism & Photography: Trouble in Paradise") Afterimage, March 1979).

Women have enjoyed quite a secure place in photography since its beginnings in 1839 when Constance Fox Talbot helped her famous husband (& father of photography) William Henry Fox Talbot. In the introduction to the book Women see Women Annie Gottlieb notes that the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848 coincided historically with photography's rise in popularity and in the Royal Photographic Society of London's founding in 1853 which

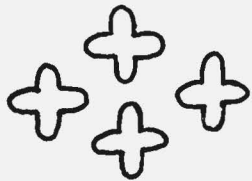
was one of the few societies open to both men and "ladies." In its beginnings, photography was defined more by economics and class than by sex; those who could afford to pursue photography as a leisure activity did so. Although photography was intended to aid art production, it never was intended as art in and of itself. Most of the publication literature of the late 19th century was scientific in nature. (Not until George Eastman introduced the Kodak camera in the 1890's could the middle class afford photography.)

Many women photographers in the 20th century either owned photography portrait studios or assisted their husbands in similar enterprises. Some had photo-journalistic jobs, or taught. Most photography societies, artistic and hobby, had high percentage of women members. The tradition continues: most students in photography circles are women. (In fact, research done by the Mattel Toy Co. found recently that becoming a photographer is one of young girls most frequent career fantasies.)

Shelley Rice to Speak May 14

In conjunction with the photography exhibition at WARM, art historian and photography critic, Shelley Rice will speak on "The Plight of Women Photographers in New York City" with a discussion on the dominant esthetic trends in New York and the ways in which they affect the acceptance of female imagery. It will be held in cooperation with the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in the MCAD auditorium on Monday, May 14 at 7:30 p.m. (free to WARM members). Shelley graduated from Smith College, received an M.A. in modern art from N.Y. University, Institute of Fine Arts, and did doctoral work in the history of photography with Peter Bunnell at Princeton University. She has taught art history and criticism at Brooklyn College, Queens College, the School of the Visual Arts, and currently teaches at Tyler School of Art, Temple University. She is a founding and contributing editor of Photograph magazine and has written photography criticism for major magazines, including the Village Voice, Art in America, Arts Magazine, Soho News, Afterimage, Ms. Magazine, and the Dumb Ox. She currently is working on a book entitled The Masculine Image: Tradition of Taboo?, a scholarly/critical study of images of males throughout the history of photography. She and Sandi Fellman are guest curators of a women's photography show for the New Museum to open next year.

Grants for the exhibition have been awarded by the Metropolitan Council from funds appropriated to the Minnesota State Arts Board, and by the Minneapolis Foundation, Pro Color, Inc., and Artsign.



Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program

This year the MAEP will be selecting three shows to be shown outside of the Institute. Please send proposals for these. Get together with other artists whose work is good and is compatible with yours. Think about unusual sites, or unusual art mediums. For example, a small magazine. Billboards. A mural around a bus - an Art Bus. A video tape running in a Greyhound bus to Park Rapids. The windows at Daytons. Sculpture on an empty field. The side of a building on I94. An Art Park idea. The center fold in Mpls. Magazine. If you have some friends in Duluth, propose an exchange show with the Tweed Museum. A page or two in Picture Magazine. A warehouse show. Of course, there will still be six shows in the Institute. Make proposals for these also. You are much more likely to be considered for an exhibit if you send a proposal.

And --- have your best work on your slides. Get good slides. Keep in mind that your slides should show a consistent line of development (Do not show work in different styles - choose one type of work and go with it. Take old slides out when you put in slides of a new type of work.) The slides should show the panel members that you are capable of putting on a show of consistent work - at least 5 slides, preferably 10.

WARM members on the MAEP panel are Mary Walker, Hazel Belvo and Jantje Visscher. Contact one of them or Stewart Turnquist for advice on writing proposals.

**MOVING SALE
PRINTMAKING/GRAPHIC/FRAMING SUPPLIES**

Inks, 24" & 36" t-squares, Badger air brush, x-actos, lead pointer, sharpener, papers, foam core, mat board, display panels, lots more Please call for full list.

Carrie: 926-6402

THE AMERICAN ABSTRACT ARTISTS:
WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE
AVANT-GARDE OF THE 1930's and 40's
by
Sandra Kraskin

This paper has been adapted from a slide-tape presentation written by Sandra Kraskin for W.A.R.M. Gallery. It was produced with funding from the Minnesota State Arts Board and C.E.T.A. Joyce Lyon provided editorial and production assistance. The paper was presented at the College Art Association's 1979 Conference in Washington D.C. The slide-tape is available for viewing or rental at W.A.R.M.

The challenge of the 30's was social, political and artistic. The Depression, the rise of Fascism and radical politics created an atmosphere of social consciousness. Roosevelt's New Deal included artists in a nationwide federal relief program. This program, the Work Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, hired artists to use their skills for public projects such as creating murals in hospitals, post offices, and schools. Community art centers were organized and sculpture was created for parks and public buildings.

Consistent with John Dewey's philosophy, this program, the WPA, made art a significant part of community life in America. Marion Greenwood's mural "Blueprint for Living" which decorated the lobby of the community center building in a Brooklyn, New York housing project, was characteristic of WPA murals.

Although many of the nations' WPA murals reflect social and political concerns, and much of the subject matter deals with local history, industry or social commentary, the government did not impose official restrictions on the style or subject matter of works of art. In fact, Burgoyne Diller, an abstract artist and a division supervisor of the New York City mural project encouraged experimentation and the development of abstract ideas. Under his direction, artists like Arshile Gorky painted murals

which explored the concepts of modern art.

Artists met each other through the WPA, thus creating an artistic community which also functioned as a focus for the development of ideas. The establishment of this artistic milieu encouraged the formation of numerous artists organizations. One of the most vital of these groups was the American Abstract Artists, formed in New York City in 1936 to promote and exhibit abstract art. Of the 28 charter members, six were women: Rosalind Bengelsdorf, Mercedes Carles, Gertrude Greene, Marie Kennedy, Alice Mason and Esphyr Slobodkina. The major issue of the group and the impetus for its formation was abstract art, and women played an important role in the dialogue of abstraction as they had in the vital issues of the WPA.

The previous generation of American artists had learned about modern art while studying in Europe. Influenced by European developments in abstraction, American artists had explored cubism, fauvism, and Futurism. Morgan Russell and Stanton MacDonald-Wright were Americans who met in Paris and developed Synchronism, a style of painting based on color rhythms. This was the "first American avant-garde painting to attract attention in Europe."¹

In the United States, Alfred Stieglitz had been showing European and American modernism in his gallery since 1908. Encouraged by Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe and Arthur Dove were among the early abstractionists in America. However, it was the Armory show of 1913 that introduced the American public to abstract art.

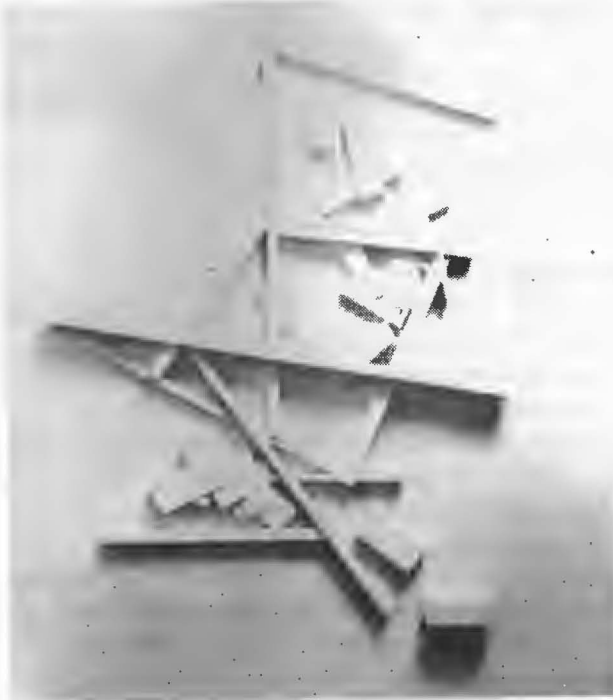
The promotion and defense of abstract art was crucial to the American Abstract Artists in the 30's. The Depression and other economic and political events of the late 20's and early 30's had turned the emphasis away from European modernism and fostered an interest in an art expressive of the American experience. The Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929 and directly reflected this nationalistic interest in the American scene. Although the Museum exhibited European abstractionists like Picasso, the American artists that they advocated were predominately realistic.



Alice Mason, Untitled lithograph from 1937 AAA portfolio.



Rosalind Bengelsdorf, Final sketch for the mural for Central Nurses Home, Welfare Island, N.Y.



Charmion von Wiegand,
The Ka Door 1949-50.



I. Rice Perreira, *Oblique Progression* 1948.

American Abstract Artistis (continued)

Museum directors, gallery dealers and art critics generally felt that abstraction in America had been a development of the 1920's and was no longer important. Even some abstract artists such as Stuart Davis felt, "The period of greatest activity in abstract [art] in America probably [had been] about 1915 to 1927."²

The art critics Royal Cortissoz and Thomas Craven criticized abstract art as being "alien" and un-American because of its European influences. Other critics were against all abstraction and even attacked the paintings of Picasso, Kandinsky and Mondrian. Emily Genauer, who wrote for the New York World Telegram, felt that abstraction was merely decoration and compared Mondrian's paintings to "... patterns for bathroom tiles."³

In reviewing the 1936 exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art" in the New York Times, critic Edward Alden Jewell expressed his frustration with abstract art. "But we, the anxious, the harrassed spectators -- we who go about trying so hard to understand abstraction as presented to us in terms of color and line and plastic form -- are we uniquely at fault when failure crowns our efforts? No, I am inclined to think that the artists themselves should be asked to shoulder their just share of the blame. Too often they who ought to be bearers of light, have walked in darkne or flown in such a fog as would keep any sensible aviator on the ground."⁴

In this atmosphere, with attitudes general against abstraction, the American Abstract Artists rented the Squibb Gallery in New York City for their first exhibition in April of 1937. Their organization and exhibitions provided a focus for the debat about abstract art.

Even within the group there was much controversy and discussion about abstraction. Some members, like Rosalind Bengelsdorf, felt that abstraction developed from stylization of nature and others like Balcolm Greene advocated "pure abstraction with no reference whatsoever t the real world. Although the members agre that abstract art was a viable expression

which should be promoted in spite of the opinions of museums and critics, they had great difficulty defining the term abstraction. In the introduction to the catalogue for their 1938 exhibition, they emphasized that the group "... place[d] a liberal interpretation upon the word 'abstraction'."⁵

Rosalind Bengelsdorf, a founding member of the AAA, preferred to call abstract painting "the new realism"⁶ because of its direct approach to nature. Abstraction, she felt, expressed what the artist knows and feels about nature and not just what the artist sees. "... Painting expresses the love of life, the form and color of life--a vibrating response to its powerful energy."⁷ In her still life painting entitled Compotier II, the abstraction is a new reality in itself, not a copy of the natural world. She believed that "... To investigate the abstract painting is to study the laws of nature,"⁸ rather than to record its appearance.

Bengelsdorf studied at the Art Students League in New York City and with Hans Hofmann. She was employed on the mural division of the WPA Federal Art Project from 1936 to 1939 and she painted a mural for the Central Nurses Home on Welfare Island.

The sketches for her mural document the development of her musical theme and the changes in its design. Influenced by Picasso, her style reflects a conceptual approach to the objects found in nature, an expression of the artist's understanding of the world. The exuberance of the arabesques of her design indicates her interest in the biomorphic shapes which distinguish the natural world from the world of geometry. The final sketch for the mural achieves greater energy and unity through the simplification of forms and the opening up of the spaces between them. The rhythm of the line of the objects is echoed by the curves of the surrounding spaces, creating a visual analogy to the sound of the musical theme. Although the earlier sketches contain musical references, the final sketch resolves this theme in a harmony of line, shape and color. This visual harmony presents the sound as dynamically as does the central image of the mural: the piano keyboard.

American Abstract Artists (continued)

Like Rosalind Bengelsdorf, Alice Trumbull Mason was an active member of the American Abstract Artists. In fact, she served as treasurer, secretary and president of the group. Her interest in abstract art was stimulated by the work of Arshile Gorky, her teacher at the Grand Central Art Galleries. Alice Trumbull Mason felt that artists should be "... free from representational limits ... to explore more fully the potential factors within [their] medium ..."⁹ In exploring this new "experimental world,"¹⁰ Alice Mason created energetic rhythms of biomorphic form in paintings such as Free White Spacing of 1939. She believed that "descriptions ... [of the natural world] only detract[ed] from the importance of ... [what is] actually happening [in a painting]."¹¹ Later her work developed into a more severe geometry, which still retains some of her feeling of forms floating on an abstract ground.

Joining the group in the late 40's, Charmion von Wiegand had also developed a very austere geometric style. Her painting was based on the neo-plastic philosophy of Mondrian. Among the artists who had left Europe because of World War II, Mondrian had come to the United States in 1940. He joined the American Abstract Artists and participated in their exhibitions. His belief that abstraction was "... a purer expression of reality"¹² was a decisive influence on Charmion von Wiegand.

She was painting landscapes when she first met Mondrian in 1941, and she recalls: "From the first moment I met Mondrian, I was a total convert to his way of thinking and seeing. And from that first meeting, my eyes were transformed. When I went out into the street again, I saw everything differently ...: the streets, the buildings, my total environment."¹³

Mondrian's painting had a great impact on several other members of the American Abstract Artists including Ilya Bolotowsky, Harry Holtzman and Burgoyne Diller.

Although her work is geometric, Irene Rice Pereira was not concerned with the pure reality of Mondrian. For her, geometric symbols were "qualities and quantities of phenomena of nature"¹⁴ She was

born in Boston in 1907 and studied at the Art Students League in New York City. Due to financial difficulties, she worked as a dress designer during the day and studied art at night. Later she joined the easel painting division of the WPA and worked at the project's Design Laboratory. She began painting linear abstract compositions in the mid-thirties and exhibited with the American Abstract Artists in 1939. Pereira began using unusual materials such as glass, marble dust and sand to create a luminous surface texture. Light and luminosity became a major concern in her exploration of the "Poetics of the Form of Space, Light and the Infinite."¹⁵ In Undulating Arrangement of 1947, she has painted on several transparent planes which project from the surface and transmit light and color. Pereira's search was for new forms to express the modern revolution of math and science. The interlocking shapes and vibrating colors of her painting Oblique Progression create a dynamic interpretation of space. Her philosophy combines science and poetry and her paintings extend the visual possibilities of abstraction.

Gertrude Greene was also an active member of the American Abstract Artists. On April 3, 1937 when their first exhibit opened to the public, Gertrude Green was sitting behind the desk. The galleries were divided almost equally between pure formal abstraction and abstraction derived from nature. George L.K. Morris recalled the excitement of opening day: in fact, he said, "... elation was so high among the exhibitors that it couldn't be dampened even by the critical wet-blankets.... Only McBride in the Sun found any merit to the show at all"¹⁶ However, over 1500 people attended the show and many of them answered the questionnaire which the group had prepared. The last question asked if the visitor liked abstract art or not. Of those polled who answered no, about half wrote, "... that they found abstract art comprised too much emotion and not enough intellect; the others that it was all intellect and not enough emotion."¹⁷

Gertrude Greene's relief constructions were formal, intellectual interpretations of abstraction. Although the first work she exhibited with the American Abstract Artists

American Abstract Artists (continued)

combined curves with right angles, by the early 40's her work was severely geometric. Influenced by the Russian constructivists, Gertrude Greene used simplified geometric forms which were constructed out of pieces of wood. Her exploration of abstract space with relief forms paralleled the two dimensional shapes of other members of the group.

Until recently, the achievements of the American Abstract Artists and of many of the artists who composed this group, have been eclipsed by the dramatic success and dominance of Abstract Expressionism. Unlike Abstract Expressionism, the American Abstract Artists had no powerful advocates among critics or museums. Although critical attention has not improved a great deal in the 1970's, museums and galleries have had major exhibitions of some of the members of this group and art historians are beginning to document the impact of the AAA. However, the most thorough source of information on the group is still Susan Larsen's unpublished dissertation of 1975.¹⁸

The contribution of the group needs to be reassessed. Not only is the abstract art created by many of the members important, but also the group was vital as an avant-garde force in the 1930's. The American Abstract Artists prepared the way for the acceptance of later abstraction. Their public demonstrations, exhibitions, and publications were in the forefront of the artistic activities which made America the world leader of modern art. Their major public confrontation was with the Museum of Modern Art. Alfred Barr, as director of the museum, consistently refused to sponsor the AAA exhibition. Ilya Bolotowsky, a charter member of the American Abstract Artists recalls the group's frustration with the Museum of Modern Art: "In 1940 the Modern Museum would not show us--but was showing the work of Eugene Speicher, a society portrait painter. And also the work of George Luks, who was a very nice fellow, a retired prize fighter and not such a bad painter for a prize fighter. But still it was all realism--second and fourth rate--...and yet, they never had any wall space for us. And so we felt that the

Modern Museum was not serving its purpose"¹⁹ In protest, the group picketed the museum in 1940 and passed out pamphlets asking "How Modern is the Museum of Modern Art?"

The AAA wrote another pamphlet in June, 1940 which they distributed at their annual exhibition. This twelve page pamphlet was titled: "The Art Critics--! How do They Serve the Public? What Do They Say? How Much Do They Know? Let's Look at the Record." The text quoted critics in an effort to embarrass them and to point out contradictions in their statements about abstract art.

In addition to these political actions, the individual artists of the AAA participated in many of the socially conscious groups of the 1930's, such as the Artists' Union, the Artists' Congress and the WPA.

The American Abstract Artists also made an important contribution to the development of abstraction through their publications. These books and exhibition catalogues functioned as a forum for avant-garde ideas about abstract art and included articles by group members as well as noted European abstractionists.

The pioneering efforts of the American Abstract Artists helped to create the artistic milieu of the 1930's and the 1940's from which the Abstract Expressionists emerged. Larsen, in fact, considers this group the first phase of the New York School.²⁰ Although the work of the American Abstract Artists has seldom been mentioned in connection with the hard-edge painters of the 1960's, it did establish a geometric tradition in America.

Kenneth Noland's painting Under Color of 1973 developed from this American geometric tradition. The painting reveals the influence of the work of AAA member Ilya Bolotowsky, particularly his painting Arctic Diamond of 1948. Bolotowsky was working on this painting when Kenneth Noland was a student of his at Black Mountain College.

Frank Stella's paintings are also a recent development which have precedents in the work of the American Abstract Artists. His shaped canvases are reminiscent of the shapes

American Abstract Artists (continued)

FOOTNOTES

of the wooden relief constructions created by Gertrude Greene and others in the 1930's and 40's.

Joseph Albers, another member of the American Abstract Artists, was one of the progenitors of minimal art. His reductive square format has been expanded and further explored in the 60's and 70's by Sol Lewitt, Tony Smith, Ellsworth Kelly and Ann Truitt.

Although the membership has changed, the American Abstract Artists have continued to exhibit as a group into the 1970's. However, the period of their greatest activity was from 1936 through World War II and throughout this time they made a significant contribution to the development of modern art.

Individually, as artists, only a few female members of the AAA have become well known. However, within the structure of the group, women held important offices and participated as equals. The women interviewed felt that they were taken seriously as artists and as group members. In fact, there was some feeling that there was less discrimination against all women artists in the 30's than after World War II.

The major issue within the group was whether abstraction should evolve from nature or be completely non-objective. On this issue the women were divided in their position as were the men.

Influenced by Picasso, Miro, Mondrian, and the Russian constructivists, the women created abstractions that are not easily distinguished from the work of the male members in either concept or imagery. And in fact, all of the members of the group were criticized for being "too decorative."

Historical surveys of 20th century art have given only brief mention to the American Abstract Artists and have not seriously considered the impact of their work. The importance of the contribution of this group and its women members can be discovered only if one questions the litany.

¹ Gail Levin, Synchromism and American Color Abstraction 1910-1925 (New York: George Braziller in association with The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978), p. 9.

² Stuart Davis, "Abstract Painting in America," Preface to Exhibition Catalogue (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, February 12-March 22, 1935), p. 1. Cited by Susan Larsen, The American Abstract Artists Group: A History and Evaluation of its Impact Upon American Art. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975, p. 44.

³ Emily Genauer, "Cubism Exhibit at Modern Museum," The World-Telegram, March 7, 1936, p. 12B. Cited by Larsen, p. 48.

⁴ Edward Alden Jewell, "The Realm of Art: Abstract Pennants Flying," New York Times, March 8, 1936, Section 9, p. 9. Cited by Larsen, p. 47-48.

⁵ American Abstract Artists, "Organization," American Abstract Artists 1938 (New York: Privately Printed, 1938), unpagued.

⁶ Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, "The New Realism," American Abstract Artists 1938 (New York: Privately Printed, 1938), VII.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Alice Mason, "Concerning Plastic Significance," American Abstract Artists 1938 (New York: Privately Printed, 1938), VI.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Piet Mondrian, "A New Realism," American Abstract Artists 1946 (New York: Ram Press, 1946), unpagued.

¹³ Margit Rowell, "An Interview With Charmion von Weigand, June 20, 1971," Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibition (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971), p. 78.

Footnotes (continued)

¹⁴ Irene Rice Pereira, The Nature of Space, (Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1968), reprint of manuscript originally published in 1956, p. 5. Cited in Larsen, p. 179.

¹⁵ Irene Rice Pereira, The Poetics of the Form of Space, Light and the Infinite (New York: Published by I. Rice Pereira, 1969). Cited in Larsen, p. 647.

¹⁶ George L.K. Morris, "The American Abstract Artists: A Chronicle 1936-56," The World of Abstract Art. Edited by the American Abstract Artists (New York: George Wittenborn Inc., 1957), p. 136.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Susan Larsen, The American Abstract Artists Group: A History and Evaluation of its Impact Upon American Art. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975.

¹⁹ Larsen, p. 511.

²⁰ Larsen, p. 429.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agee, William C. The 1930's: Painting and Sculpture in America. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968.

American Abstract Artists. American Abstract Artists 1938. New York: Privately Printed, 1938.

_____. American Abstract Artists 1939. New York: Privately Printed, 1939.

_____. American Abstract Artists 1946. New York: The Ram Press, 1946.

_____. American Abstract Artists 1936-1966. With Introduction by Ruth Gurin. New York: The Ram Press, 1966.

_____. "How Modern Is the Museum of Modern Art?" New York: Privately Printed, April 15, 1940. One-page broadside with typography by A.D.F. Reinhardt.

_____. "The Art Critics--! How Do They Serve the Public? What Do They Say? How Much Do They Know? Let's Look at the Record!" New York: Privately Printed, June, 1940. Twelve-page pamphlet written by members of the group with typography designed by A.D.F. Reinhardt.

_____. The World of Abstract Art. Edited by the American Abstract Artists. New York: George Wittenborn Inc., 1957.

Browne, Rosalind Bengelsdorf. "The American Abstract Artists and the W.P.A. Federal Art Project." In The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs. Edited by Francis O'Connor. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972, pp. 222-44.

Genauer, Emily. "Cubism Exhibit at Modern Museum." New York World-Telegram, March 7, 1936, p. 12B.

Harris, Ann Sutherland and Linda Nochlin. Women Artists: 1550-1950. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.

Harrison, Helen A. and Karal Ann Marling, 7 American Women: The Depression Decade. New York: Hamilton Reproductions, Inc. 1976. Catalogue from Exhibition at Vassar College Art Gallery sponsored by A.I.R. Gallery.

Jewell, Edward Alden. "The Realm of Art: Abstract Pennants Flying" New York Times, March 8, 1936, Section 9, p. 9.

Kraskin, Sandra. "An Interview with Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne." New York City, 1977. Unpublished.

_____. "An Interview with Esphyr Slobodkina." New York City, November 13, 1978. Unpublished.

Kraskin, Sandra and Susan Larsen. "An Interview with Charmion von Wiegand." New York City, September 3, 1978. Unpublished.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued)

- Larsen, Susan. The American Abstract Artists Group: A History and Evaluation of its Impact upon American Art. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975.
- Levin, Gail. Synchromism and American Color Abstraction 1910-1925. New York: George Braziller in association with The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978.
- McKinzie, Richard D. The New Deal for Artists. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- McNeil, George. "American Abstract Artists Venerable at Twenty." Art News, V. 55 (May, 1956), pp. 34-35.
- O'Connor, Francis V., ed. Art For the Millions, Essays from the 1930's by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1973.
- . The New Deal Art Projects, An Anthology of Memoirs. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972.
- Pereira, Irene Rice. The Nature of Space: A Metaphysical and Aesthetic Inquiry. Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1968.
- . The Poetics of the Form of Space, Light and the Infinite. New York: Published by I. Rice Pereira, 1969.
- Richie, Andrew C. Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951.
- Rowell, Margit. "Interview With Charmion von Wiegand, June 20, 1971." In Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibition. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971. pp. 77-86.
- Whitney Museum of American Art. Abstract Painting in America. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1935. Catalogue Essay by Stuart Davis.
- . Geometric Abstraction in America. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1962. Catalogue Essay by John Gordon.

No More Free-Bees

The next issue of the Newsletter comes out in September and will be mailed to paid members only. Use this handy form and mail it in by August 1, to be on the next Newsletter mailing list. We have some ambitious plans for the Newsletter, and you won't want to miss a single issue. So you don't forget, mail before midnight tonight!

If you are neither a member nor a woman visual artist in Minnesota but would like to receive the Newsletter, you may become a supporting member for an annual fee of \$8.00. (See form at back.) Supporting members will receive announcements as well as quarterly issues of the Newsletter.

If you are a 1979 paid member and are not receiving the newsletter or announcements, please fill in your address below and return to WARM, attn. mailing list.

Newsletter Accepts Advertising

Beginning with our next issue in September, the Newsletter will be running paid advertisements at the following rates:

\$50.	full page
\$25.	half page
\$13.	quarter page
\$ 7.	eighth page

This is something new for the Newsletter, and since we publish quarterly, rates must be subject to change without notice. Ads must be submitted by regular Newsletter deadline. If interested, please contact the newsletter committee for more information.

Membership Form

Membership in the Women's Art Registry of Minnesota is open to all women artists in the State of Minnesota, and to WARM supporters both in and out of the state. There are three categories of membership.

ACTIVE Members are elected to that position. They hold office and make policy in the organization and participate in all aspects of the WARM Gallery.

ASSOCIATE Members participate in committee activity of the organization, attend WARM meetings, receive the newsletter and other communications, and may join in all activities including the Slide Registry.

SUPPORTING Members are those men and women who support WARM and its activities and wish to communicate with the organization. They receive the newsletter and other WARM communications, and may attend WARM activities. Donations from Supporting Members will be accepted.

1979 DUES: Associate - \$10.00 Supporting - over \$8.00

NEW MEMBERS and **CURRENT MEMBERS WITH CHANGES** in their address or membership category complete both forms below. **CURRENT MEMBERS WITH NO CHANGES**, complete only 1979 Payment Record form.

Mail forms with 1979 dues to: WARM / 414 First Avenue North / Minneapolis, MN 55401

Name _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____

Artistic Interest _____

For Official Use

ACTIVE:
76-77-78-79-80

ASSOCIATE:
76-77-78-79-80

SUPPORTING:
76-77-78-79-80

SLIDE REGISTRY:
76-77-78-79-80



1979 Payment Record

Name _____	Date Paid _____
Address _____	
Phone(s) _____ / _____	
\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Associate Dues (\$10.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Slide Registry Fee (\$2.50)
Amount Paid	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dues (over \$8.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

3 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Associate Members Meeting.

7 Saturday, 9:30 a.m. Gallery Members Meeting.

31 Deadline for submissions to the September Newsletter.

JULY

The Gallery will be closed during the month of August. No meetings or shows are scheduled.

AUG.



414 First Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55403

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Minneapolis MN
Permit No. 8 6 6