

Eye to Eye



AUGUST 2010

The Annual Exhibit is a vital part of Art With Elders; so is the Gala Reception that introduces it. This issue focuses on what they mean to the artists involved and invites you to help, in this tough economy, make the Gala happen!.

Pam Hagen, Editor

A DYNAMIC NEW PHASE OF LIFE

Having gotten through the initial crisis of how to care for my mother, **Beatrice Meyer**, once she had a stroke at age 77, the next big concern was what she would do all day. I had brought her from her life-long home in Brooklyn to live at a senior facility in the Bay Area.

One Sunday my mother surprised me by coolly mentioning that she was trying to paint. She had never done any art work in her adult life. But as the months passed, my mom kept at it, telling me about her painting each weekend and showing me some of her pieces. I noticed that her work improved and became more evocative and expressive.



During one visit my mother casually mentioned that her teacher had decided to enter one of her paintings in a Bay Area senior art show called the "Annual Art with Elders Exhibit." I could see that she was proud and excited to share this with me; what a relief from the despair of her recent illness.

A few weeks later, upon my arrival, she gleefully called out, "Guess what! My painting is in the art show!" She looked thrilled. She explained that the exhibit was going to travel around the region for a year and that the paintings would be seen by thousands of people.

She was now not just an ill, aged woman living in a facility, but an artist launched on a dynamic new phase of her life. This journey of expression and new burst of pride lasted for the remaining five years of her life. The exhibits gave her a sense of not just painting in isolation but of being someone whose work mattered to others and was recognized. It immeasurably enhanced the last years of her life.

Mitch Meyer, ELDERGIVERS Board Member

"Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky."

Rabindranath Tagore

INTENSE AND ALIVE Biographer Kathy Barrows



By Kathy Barrows

As the biographer for the AWE program, I always consider myself the "lucky one." It's been my privilege to have interviewed and written short bios for over one hundred of the artists who have been chosen for the annual exhibit and to witness firsthand their appreciation for and excitement about the program. As 90 year old **Lynne Meyer**, a resident of Reutlinger Community for Jewish Living, put it, "Even at the worst times in your life, you can always have something to look forward to. One of those things is my art class. When I'm painting, I feel intense and alive."

"Intense and alive" is how I feel also, after witnessing the stories of these remarkable elders, most frail and in wheelchairs. Many have never had anyone ask them about their lives. Our conversations open up a treasure chest of accumulated wisdom and paint another picture---that of the lives of strong resilient people who continue to learn in new ways about themselves and the world around them.



Beauties by Alvin Hall, 18th Annual Exhibit. The 19th Annual Exhibit, which opens in October 2010, will be his third Annual Exhibit.

A common theme among all the artists, besides their disbelief that they are "real artists," is how doing art takes them to a different place. As one artist put it, "Art is a way of getting out of myself and out of here [the facility where she

lived]." Others speak of the discovery of the value of learning to express their emotions through art and of acquiring a new way of looking at the world. At 90, one artist used the words of Matisse, who died at the age of 85 – "I'm just beginning to see."



And it's not just their experience in the art classes, but the sense of pride that comes with having their art exhibited. I'll never forget the beaming face of 67-year-old **Alvin Hall** at the gala event at the Moscone Center a few years back. (Alvin Hall and his wife Leola are pictured here at the gala). We had first

met in his modest room at Oakland's McClure Convalescent Hospital, where he repeatedly spoke of the devotion of his wife of 35 years since a devastating stroke. Many decades in the past, he explained, he had drawn to pass the time while at sea as a merchant seaman. Now, through his AWE class, he realized he "still had it," adding with a wide smile "If I keep at it, maybe I can become Mr. Michelangelo." Like a picture, the smile of his wife is worth a thousand words. ❖

ELDER ARTIST

David Reiff's Fourth Annual Exhibit

The 19th Annual Exhibit will be the fourth year that **David Reiff's** work has been exhibited in it, but he has never had the opportunity to attend the opening or gala, or to actually see the exhibit. He's hoping that will change this year.

Now 75 and living at Oakhill Springs Care Center, David started the Art With Elders class as therapy, but soon found that the classes gave him a way to keep growing. He says the theme of his life has been learning and growth.

His first experience with art was in the fifth and sixth grades. Although he loved it, work and responsibilities kept him from having an opportunity to pursue it until now.



Two of David Reiff's work that have been part of recent exhibits. On the left, *Memoire of My Hong Kong Trip* from the 18th Annual Exhibit. On the right, *Little Landscape* from the 17th Annual Exhibit.

He finds that art gives him more intention in his life. It's not a source of self-worth to him, but it is source of self-direction. With art he feels like a more complete person.

The class has given him a chance to develop his own style. He finds his taste is changing over the years. He started with landscapes but has started experimenting with other themes. He would love to try working in clay, but he will never stop painting.

"Insio is a good instructor," he says. "We learn from each other." Although his art is done "98% for himself," if someone else likes it, that is fine, but he has no interest in approaching art as a competition. He does appreciate the recognition that his work is getting.



Artist-Instructor Insio Che and Elder Artist David Reiff

He says art gives him hope for the future and his advice to everyone is "Don't live life without creating art!" ❖

"Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born."

Dale E. Turner

ARTIST-INSTRUCTOR

Insio Che

Insio has been teaching in the Art With Elders program for the past five years and presently teaches at Oakhill Springs Care Center in Oakland, Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco (a class taught in Cantonese) and at Oak Center Towers in Oakland.

She's a young woman who says that the road to achieving her dreams has been filled with hurdles and challenges. Raised in a traditional Chinese family, she was often urged to set aside her dreams and aspirations in order to prepare for a future as a good wife and mother. While respecting these values, she knew that she needed to follow her own dreams and goals.

Her love for classical music developed her artistic sensibilities and eventually led her to fine art drawing and painting. She received a BFA in Illustration from the Academy of Art University in 2002.



Moment to Relax by Insio Che. You can see more of her work at www.insioart.com.

She says "My goal as an artist is to discover the inner beauty of humanity and nature. I'm compelled to capture the beauty of life's essence through vibrant light, harmonizing colors, and the seductive mystery of shadows."

She feels her work with ELDERGIVERS has made her more mature and more sensitive to other people. It has also made her realize how self-absorbed she was during her own art studies. These classes require her to find new ways to communicate, to think about why she is doing art, and why she is teaching.

The work is challenging. It's not just the varied backgrounds and abilities of her students - it's also being a young woman teaching elders. The Chinese culture has great respect for elders and some of her students have trouble accepting her as a teacher. After all, she is the age of their grandchildren.

She approaches art as something that they can learn together and she stays aware of the situation as an opportunity for her own growth. She makes a point of introducing herself to them with respect and encourages her students to enjoy the art classes. And she praises them for their courage in trying something new and unfamiliar.

This work has made her more aware that the point of art is to communicate and to affect others. ❖

Be brave enough to live creatively. The creative is the place where no one else has ever been. You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. You cannot get there by bus, only by hard work, risking and by not quite knowing what you are doing. What you will discover will be wonderful: yourself.

Alan Alda

ELDER ARTISTS

Yao Dong Lao and Yip Hao-Kuang: Their First AWE Exhibit

Yao Dong Lao and Yip Hao-Kuang both live at A&C Convalescent in Millbrae and each will be part of the Annual Exhibit for the first time this fall.

Although this will be **Yao Dong Lao's** first entry in the Exhibit, he is far from a beginner. He comes from a family of artists in China. As a child, Mr. Lao studied with an uncle who was a famous artist and then continued his studies of Chinese brush painting at the university. He worked with an accomplished artist there who he eventually surpassed in skill. Mr. Lao went on to teach art in Hong Kong for many years.



Mr. Lao says that one can create a picture that looks like a flower, but that it is better to have a painting that captures the essence of the flower. A few blossoms can represent the plant in its entirety, and, in fact, all of life - a Tao principle. Rather than looking at the subject as you paint, you bring it forth from your mind and heart, from your becoming part of nature. His paintings are of orchids, birds, bamboo, mountains, and rivers.

He has lived at A&C since having a stroke five years ago. The stroke ended his teaching and his dancing, but he knows more than 100 songs and still loves to sing them.



Yip Hao-Kuang suffered a stroke two years ago and now lives at A&C with her husband who at 95 is ten years her senior. She has been working hard to regain her ability to paint. As soon as she was able, she started participating in the Art With Elders class. She is very happy to be selected to be part of the Annual Exhibit.

She loves art and it has been part of her life since she was a child in Hong Kong. She studied with an art teacher in school but also had private lessons.

She has an accomplished family. Her three children moved to the US, and eventually she and her husband followed to help care for their grandchildren. Some of the grandchildren are now in Shanghai to attend high school and university. Deeply religious, she and her husband often read the Bible together and her son is a Baptist minister in Toronto.

She would love to draw every day. Her eyes are no longer very good so she has changed from drawing small highly detailed objects to working with larger subjects. The first to arrive for class and the last to leave, she is always willing to be of service. She assists the teacher and students as well as working on her own paintings. ❖

ENRICHING LIFE THROUGH ART

Photographer W. Guy Poole

W. Guy Poole has been making photographic portraits of the artists for the annual exhibits since 2003. It was his first job as a photographer and the beginning of a new profession for him.

He is an idealist. Rejecting what he sees as our culture's distorted sense of what lives have value, he works to capture an image of people that tells who they really are.

His approach is environmental portraiture. He captures both the individual artist and a sense of where and how they live. The goal is to tell the story of who this person is through the photograph. His black & white portraits, along with the short biographies, are framed with the paintings, introducing the viewer to the artist through three different "windows".

He is as much a visitor as a photographer as he travels around the Bay Area taking photos of the 87 artists whose work will be shown in the 19th Annual Exhibit. He makes a point of connecting with each person and getting a sense of who they are before taking their picture. It may be a conversation or a simple touch for those who have trouble speaking.

The elders tell him how much they love the art program and the Artist-Instructors who teach them.

The work with ELDERGIVERS is very rewarding to him, satisfying all aspects of what he wanted photography to bring into his life. It takes him to places he wouldn't otherwise see and introduces him to new cultures, lives and situations. It enriches his life with a new understanding of aging and a deeper appreciation for the healthy body that he enjoys now.



Guy Poole's favorite self-portrait.

He loves doing this work and says the experience bears witness to the direct enrichment of life through art. ❖

"The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age."

Lucille Ball

DO YOU HAVE A CAR YOU NO LONGER NEED?



New car sales are up which is good news for the economy; used vehicle donations are up, too, which is good news for nonprofit organizations. If you have a car you would like to donate to ELDERGIVERS, please give us a call at 415-441-2650 or email info@eldergivers.org.

ELDERGIVERS' WISH LIST

Here are some items that would definitely make our lives at ELDERGIVERS better and more efficient:

Computer (\$430 plus shipping)

www.dell.com

Our five year old computer really needs updating!

Vostro 230 ST (Slim Tower)

Intel® Core™ 2 Duo E7500 w/ VT (2.93GHz, 3M, L2Cache, 1066FSB)

Genuine Windows® 7 Home Premium 32 bit

Dell 20 inch Widescreen E2010H Flat Panel Display

Single Drive: 16X (DVD+/-RW) Burner Drive

Three Storage Cabinets (\$459 each, free shipping)

<http://storage-cabinets.officefurniture.com>

These cabinets will keep the artworks secure.

Brand: Tennsco

Dimensions: 36"W x 24"D x 78"H

Weight: 194 lbs.

Art Supplies

Canvas boards

Watercolor paper

Water color paints

Art crayons

Pencils

If you would like to drop items off at our offices or need further information, contact Brent Nettle at 415-441-2650 or info@eldergivers.org. We will send you a written acknowledgment of your gift.



Visit the website to learn more about us, keep up with the traveling exhibit, and see the online galleries.

ELDERGIVERS

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100 x \$50 = \$5,000

19th Annual Exhibit Gala Reception

Everyone involved in ELDERGIVERS eagerly awaits the Annual Art With Elders Exhibit. Especially the artists whose work is being showcased.

There's always a special thrill of recognition for the artists that comes from attending the Gala Reception – the high energy inaugural party that normally marks the exhibit's official introduction to the public.

We had to skip the reception in 2009 – a victim of the recession. And what a huge disappointment, particularly after that memorable evening at One Market Plaza in downtown San Francisco the year before when over 500 gathered to celebrate the 17th Annual Exhibit.



Last year was the first time since AWE was started in 1991 that a new exhibit was launched SILENTLY! The roar of the crowd was missing, and it was palpable. This is not going to happen this year!

Especially if YOU have anything to say about it.

The budget for the gala is usually about \$25,000 – a very reasonable amount for an event this size. A modest ticket charge brings in some revenue, foundation grants help us meet expenses and our wonderful sponsors contribute their support.

After figuring out ways to trim the 2010 gala expenses to around \$18,000 (while maintaining the quality everyone expects of an AWE party), we're still short of the mark.

What can you do to help? A donation of just \$50 from 100 readers will make the Gala happen.

100 x \$50 = \$5,000

It's a very reachable target!

Please write your check today and use the enclosed envelope to help raise an early cheer –

“I'M WITH YOU ON THIS!”

Or go now to www.eldergivers.org and make a secure on-line contribution.

And then be sure to join us for a great party in October. The date and location will be announced as soon as we reach the **break even** point on the gala budget.



Fall Fundraiser

September 29th

Join us at a private home in San Francisco to celebrate the wisdom, talents and creativity of older adults in our Art With Elders (AWE) program.

Circle this date on your social calendar!

Wednesday
September 29, 2010
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
San Francisco

On 9/29, we'll gather in a very modern Potrero Hill gallery/home, built in 2005, with plenty of "green" features. Join us and:

- ❖ enjoy delicious **Vietnamese cuisine**
- ❖ sample **fine California wines**
- ❖ **preview and purchase art** from the 18th and 19th Annual Exhibits
- ❖ browse and buy AWE's **new art book** (see Berthe Baron at right).
- ❖ and, of course, **learn more about ELDERGIVERS'** present and future plans.



Space is limited. Invitations will be mailed at the end of August. If you'd like to make reservations now, or to request an invitation, call 415.441.2650 or email info@eldergivers.org. All proceeds will be invested in the Art With Elders (AWE) program (most of the ticket price is tax-deductible).

More than 350 seniors in five Bay Area counties explore and develop their artistic talents in weekly classes taught 50 weeks out of each year because individuals like you give generously to support AWE. In the midst of a very difficult economy, ELDERGIVERS has been able to maintain, and even modestly expand, the number of AWE sites.

With your help we'll ensure the stability of this program and have some fun doing it!

ELDERGIVERS is a 501(c)(3) organization, recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt entity. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent of the law. ELDERGIVERS depends on public and private contributions to fund its program.



Berthe Baron: Recollections of an Ordinary Woman

"To show that you're never too old to learn...Art With Elders sends art teachers into retirement homes to work with seniors. So at the age of 89, I discovered I'm something of an artist."

Berthe Baron

Thanks to the magnanimous spirit of Berthe Baron's family who underwrote the cost of this beautiful volume, the life and art of an intrepid Holocaust survivor is available for all to learn from and enjoy.

The entire book can be read AT NO COST on the website www.eldergivers.org (Galleries and Events/Buy Books), but we hope that you will find this 60-page full color volume so inspiring that you will purchase a hard copy for yourself (\$30.00, taxes and shipping included) and consider buying at least one extra for someone else.

- ❖ What an inspiration this could be for an elder! Perhaps your own parent? Maybe a friend in a long-term care facility?
- ❖ Give a copy to a neighborhood library?
- ❖ Or, make the book available to a professional artist you know who may eventually become part of AWE's teaching team.

Donate a minimum of \$50 and you'll receive a free book. Your purchase, or tax-deductible donation, will mean that others like Berthe Baron continue to find fresh meaning and purpose in life and to maintain vital connections to their families and communities through AWE classes and exhibits.

For more information or to purchase a book, call 415.441.2650 or write to us at info@eldergivers.org. Volume discounts are available.