

# For 10 years, her organization has given art away

By Geoff Edgers  
GLOBE STAFF

There is no art at the Manet Community Health Center in Quincy, save for a trio of bland, shoebox-sized Cape Cod landscapes in the waiting room. That's why, on a recent afternoon, a group of administrators in a dark boardroom reviewed slides of paintings, sculptures, and photographs.

Jay Knox, program manager for the Art Connection, ran the projector. He stopped clicking only when a piece caught somebody's eye. That was the case with a painting of a bare-chested woman leaning back seductively in a chair.

"I like that," said Jeanne Grande, the center's clinical operations manager. "But it's not appropriate."

Click.

This is the sort of discussion that often takes place during a visit from the Art Connection, a Boston-based organization that places art in local hospitals, halfway houses, and schools. This year, the nonprofit, started by artist Fay Chandler, marks its 10th anniversary. During that time, the Art Connection has built a three-person staff and a stable of more than 135 artists providing work for placement. Its roughly \$220,000 budget is raised mostly through individual donations and grants from foundations. In all, the Art Connection has given 2,000 pieces to 165 different agencies.

"When I heard about them, I said, 'You've got to be kidding, somebody gives away art,'" says Henry Goodrow, then director of



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**Artist Fay Chandler started the nonprofit Art Connection to place works in local hospitals, halfway houses, and schools. More than 135 artists now contribute.**

external relations at the Codman Square Health Center in Dorchester.

The center acquired about a dozen pieces.

"Then, about a year later, I get this call from the Art Connection saying we'd like to talk to you and see how we did," says Goodrow, now director of institutional giving at Boston Ballet and an Art Connection board member. "I had never heard of it before in my life. The organization that gave us something for free wanted to see if they gave it well."

Just as the Art Connection isn't a typical service agency, the 82-year-old Chandler is no regular

artist.

She didn't pick up a brush until her 40s, doing a correspondence course before earning her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1967. Chandler then embarked on a career that's seen her paint with oil, acrylics, and spray paint. She also began to make sculptures, many of them small enough to fit in a shoebox, out of materials found in thrift shops and left out on the curb for garbage pickup.

"The humor comes out in the shapes of the people in her paintings and in the endlessly fascinating collection of junk in her constructions," The Boston Globe wrote of her 1986 show at the Bos-

ton Center for the Arts.

Chandler moved to Boston in 1971 with her husband, Alfred, who had been hired to teach at the Harvard Business School. Before long, her studio was filled with art.

Though she has always enjoyed showing to the public — her next exhibition is in April at the Cyclorama — she has never worked hard to sell the pieces. With her studio overflowing, Chandler came up with the idea for the Art Connection. Over the years, the organization has grown to include the other half-dressed-plus artists.

"My children were all moving around, and they had all the pieces they had space for," said

Chandler in a recent interview from her studio on Western Avenue in Brighton. "I decided after a little while that I was really making it to go out in the world, not to sit on a shelf and not to be in storage."

Clients of the Art Connection say they understand the purpose and appreciate getting a chance to display works by accomplished artists largely from the Boston area, including Ken Beck, Suzanne Hodes, and the late Maud Morgan.

"I don't know why art should be restricted to a museum or rich people. Art should be open to anyone," says Carolyn Cashman, who runs a construction company and is a member of the Manet's board of development.

In the boardroom in Quincy, Knox worked to steer the organization toward the right choices. As they struggled to reconcile personal taste with function, he told them about a recent meeting he had at a neonatal unit. The administrators almost settled on a photograph of a cow. They changed their minds, though, fearing that some mothers would feel as if they were being compared to cows.

At Manet, the staff ends up choosing 13 works, including three woodcuts by Ruth Ginsberg-Place and a series of paintings by Sam Tan.

"We are so fortunate," says Lyn Dionne, the Manet's director of development. "It will be so nice to have beautiful artwork for our patients to enjoy."

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