

A Double Celebration at the Cyclorama: Fay Chandler's 80th Birthday and The Art Connection's 8th Anniversary



Fay Chandler dances with Larry Bell, professor of composition and theory at Boston Conservatory.

Those close to Fay Chandler knew her 80th birthday would be anything but typical. Said to be the longest and heaviest infant born at her hospital in Norfolk, VA, Fay was never one to do things the "usual" way. A celebration of both her 80th birthday and the 8th anniversary of The Art Connection, an organization she conceptualized and started, was destined to be an event to remember! And indeed, from the moment they ascended the steps into the Boston Center for the Arts impressive Cyclorama, the 400 guests quickly realized that this was no ordinary celebration.

Perhaps it was the imposing box art decorating the space or the cheerful 12-foot robot (created by Fay especially for the occasion) towering over the celebrants. Perhaps it was the guests, a highly heterogeneous group of artists including many TAC contributing artists, representatives from recipient agencies, friends and family dressed in everything from jeans to ball-

room gowns, mini skirts to Scottish kilts, African Dashikis to Japanese Kimonos. Or perhaps it was the birthday banners decorating the walls, a colorful contribution by children touched by Fay's work. Clearly, this was an unusual party for an unusual person.

The party kicked off with a spirited meet-and-greet reception, enhanced by a bounty of food, libations and marimba music, following which guests were seated for a more formal celebration of Fay and her work. Fay's daughter-in-law, Reverend Susan Chandler, led Grace over the festive meal. Post dinner, guests were afforded with privileged insight into the life and work of Fay Chandler, courtesy of her husband, Al Chandler, her son Appy and colleagues at the Art Connection.

"Eight years ago at the age of 72, I got an idea – a basic concept that in time developed into The Art Connection. If it worked, I'd be happy for my paintings, but would other artists feel as I did?" said Chandler, clearly overwhelmed by the standing ovation that welcomed her to the stage. The success of TAC since its inception is concrete indica-

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Toni and Nick Chandler, Co-Chairs for The Art Connection's September 8-80 Celebration.

"Listening to Images"— The Art of Eleanor Rubin

The roads to becoming an artist are as varied as the artists affiliated with The Art Connection (TAC). In fact, TAC artist Eleanor Rubin ("Elly" to friends and family) never planned to become an artist. That role was already filled by her identical twin, Joanne Leonard. "She was the one who really knew how to draw," Rubin says with a smile. "I was the cellist." As fate would have it, Joanne decided to pursue photography (herself a successful artist and a Professor at the University of Michigan's School of Art and Design), thus vacating the "drawing" position.

Leaving the cello behind, Rubin turned to study with Paul Wiegardt, a painter who was a student of Paul Klee (both major sources of inspiration for Rubin). More recently, she studied watercolor with Marian Parry at Radcliffe Seminars. Her artwork is in many permanent collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Boston Public Library; the Centrum Masereel, Kesterlee, Belgium; and the College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, California. Having recently retired from nearly 25 years at the Museum of Fine Arts as the Coordinator of Access for Audiences with Disabilities, Eleanor Rubin has turned to full-time pursuit of her art.

In the barn reincarnated as a studio behind her West Newton house, Rubin's prolific body of work takes center stage. However, a very large press, a tool central to all her printmaking, does take up a lot of room! The press also comes in handy as a large surface for reviewing Rubin's impressive portfolio, which also includes watercolors. At first, the two bodies of work seem very different from each other: one hard with resistance, one flowing. One chosen for dynamic black and white, the other for nuances of vibrant color. In both though, Rubin is clearly keen on exploring textures. Moreover, in both mediums, the role of text is often paramount.

When Rubin first began working with visual images, she was making a transition from literature to art, from sounds and text to images. A former music student taking on a new medium, she was seeking a new

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The Art Connection, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, seeks to enrich and educate underserved communities by expanding public access to original works of art. Since many public and nonprofit institutions have no resources with which to acquire original art, and because artists often have unsold work, The Art Connection aims to increase the flow of art from the artists to those who would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience art in their lives.

2002 by The Art Connection, Inc.
We welcome your contributions and comments. Please call or send email to artinfo@art2life.org.

Report from the Executive Director

There's nothing like a big birthday party to bring friends together for some fun. Unless its a double birthday celebration, with 400 friends of The Art Connection and founder Fay Chandler gathered under one splendid dome. Better yet, a triple-celebration. Not only did Fay Chandler's 80th birthday coincide with The Art Connection's 8th, Fay's husband Al turned 84 the very same day!

There was cake, much merriment, dancing, artists and agency representatives in abundance, marimba music, an acappella quartet, box sculptures, birthday banners from art recipient agencies, and much more. We had a wonderful celebration, thanks to many of you who were able to join us. Also, we were able to use this occasion, with the stars and "8s" aligned, to launch our Founder's Vision Fund. The giant telescope on hand, courtesy of the Revolving Museum, served as a symbol of our vision. And our vision is simple: maintain and build our art donation and placement program in greater Boston and begin to market the concept for this program in communities beyond Boston. In other words, to share

our recipe for success with organizations that wish to create similar programs in their own communities. Our focus will continue to remain on Boston. But it is also an opportune time to take our novel idea--now thoroughly tested--and spread the word!

It does take funding to turn a vision into a reality and build a successful program. At the birthday party we were thrilled to announce that in the quiet phase of our Vision Fund campaign we had raised \$280,000. And since the event we have raised an additional \$60,000 towards a goal of \$400,000! This fund will be utilized over a four-year period to allow us to achieve the clear goals we have outlined in our vision plan.

The challenge, like our vision, is simple. We need your help in raising an additional \$60,000 before June 30, 2003. I hope that you'll continue to support us in bringing art to life! Thank you.

Jim McDonald, executive director

Board members Henry Goodrow and Alyce Adams, in front of The Art Connection's Fine Art Portfolio at the September celebration.



Creative attire for a festive occasion! Photographer Bruce Hamilton with Tom Baker (above), and artist Jean Townsend and Karin Johnston (right) at TAC's September birthday celebration.





Woodcuts and tools used in the artist studio.

“Listening to Images” ...from page 1

vocabulary. “I often think about sound and image and how they connect.” says Rubin, commenting on why she includes text in many of her images. Struck by the sound of words and what they might “look” like, her images often originate from verses or poems. But they evolve greatly along the way. And often, to the bemusement of her audience, the words included in her images offer content but no clear meaning. She compares her work to dreams, where stories and words have neither rhyme nor reason. “I want people to be drawn to the complexity of the images.

They contain happiness and pain in equal measure.”

Eleanor’s work has been selected by a number of TAC agencies, including: Ethos, providing a variety of services for the elderly in southwestern communities of Boston, and the Walnut Street Center, providing the necessary resources to adults with development disabilities so that they can live full and meaningful lives in the community.

Though Rubin is no longer an active musician, music continues to play an important role in her art. She is currently drawing inspiration from the music of Hikari Oe. Oe was born with a severe brain deformity that resulted in retardation, autism, near-blindness and poor coordination. In spite of these difficulties, he has become an accomplished composer of neo-classical music. The parallels

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-Eleanor Rubin

between Rubin’s art and Hikari Oe’s music are striking. Oe expresses with music that which he cannot express in words. Rubin does the

same with visual images: “I began to draw and make prints because I have much to ‘say’ about emotional experiences for which there are no words. Creating images makes it possible to give voice to feelings.

by Miri Goldstein



Sarah Shallbetter, TAC Program Coordinator and artist Eleanor Rubin.

Spring Social at RESPOND, Inc.



Staff members Maria Torres, Georgianna Meléndez, Board member Donna Cantillo, artist Prilla Smith Brackett’s painting “Becoming #5”, and staff member Daniele Levin at the RESPOND, Inc. spring reception celebrating the installation of 21 original works of art donated through The Art Connection.

RESPOND, Inc. hosted a spring social for The Art Connection (TAC) on May 21, 2002 and invited board members, volunteers, and staff from both organizations. The celebration recognized the 21 artworks donated by TAC

artists: Prilla Smith Brackett, Martha Jane Bradford, Fay Chandler, Ruth Ginsberg-Place, Shlomith Haber-Schaim, Carloyn Muskat, Cora Roth, Anne Silber, and Maria Termini.

Survivors of domestic violence come to RESPOND for help. Its services range from counseling and hot-

“The artwork lifts our spirits and those of the women we serve. It will continue to touch others for many years to come.”

line services to emergency shelters, violence prevention, and community education. While often hiding from their batterers, these women and children are seeking not only physical safety but also emotional protection, and the donated art creates a warm and comfortable space to share stories and reconstruct their lives free from violence.

RESPOND’s selection committee wanted to choose appropriate art for its program participants and also create a visual identity

for the nonprofit agency. The initial placement was for the Somerville headquarters, but Respond more than doubled its staff in Malden and moved into a new site there. The Malden staff heard about Somerville and asked TAC for help. The second placement followed in Somerville’s footsteps, and Malden’s selection committee adeptly used art to humanize its stark, new space.

The spring social celebrated both placements. At the event, TAC board member Amanda Hurd, artist Prilla Smith Brackett, as well as executive director Jim McDonald and program manager

Jay Knox took the opportunity to talk with a few of the pioneering women who founded RESPOND 28 years ago. Founders who remain involved with RESPOND were astonished by the impact of the art placements.

“It was an honor to participate in this incredible project. The artists’ kindness was an inspiration to us all,” said Elizabeth Costa, administrative manager of RESPOND, Inc. “The artwork lifts our spirits and those of the women we serve. It will continue to touch others for many years to come.”

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tion that indeed, other artists and the community at large shared Fay's belief that art belonged where it could be appreciated, not in storage, nor, god forbid, as humorously recounted by Appy Chandler, at a thrift shop. "She asked us what we — upon her death — planned to do with her art inventory ... Well, we executors stared blankly, looked at one another then back to Mom and an ominous silence ensued — at least, that is, until Mom whispered sotto voce: 'Please, not on the floor of Morgan Memorial' ..."

Eight years later, Fay's dream has become a rapidly growing placement

organization with an impressive portfolio of 1200 pieces of art, 108 recipient agencies and 90 contributing artists and collectors. In fact, the success of TAC is such that agencies outside of Boston have taken notice and are looking to model similar programs in their own communities.

During his speech honoring Fay, Jim McDonald, TAC's Executive Director



"It's simple, if you believe that visual art has value in society—to inspire, challenge, heal, and communicate—we need you to invest in The Art Connection."

announced yet another reason for celebration: the launch of the Founder's Vision Fund, which will provide the financial backing for an ambitious new strategic plan allowing TAC to model its innovative program in other communities. "It is my great pleasure to announce that in the quiet phase of our campaign we have raised \$280,000, to 'bring even more art to life' in greater Boston, and to begin the process of

sharing our program with other communities and other organizations beyond Boston." Jim noted that TAC's goal is to raise \$400,000 by June 2003. He

echoed the sentiment articulated by both former TAC Chair Amanda Hurd and current Chair Mary Coogan "We have done an incredible job already, but we need your help. It's simple, if you believe that visual art has value in society, to inspire, challenge, heal, and communicate — we need you to invest in The Art Connection."

And the investing began that very night. If the contributions made during post-dinner festivities, amidst the live music and dancing, are any indication of things to come, TAC friends are clearly committed to taking Fay's dream, which has since become their own, beyond Boston. Those who know Fay Chandler would not have been surprised by this quick response to her new vision for TAC. As Amanda Hurd, Chair of the TAC board noted "We have all gathered tonight to celebrate a woman that no one can say no to....Why? Because Fay Chandler is an alchemist. Fay encourages and inspires all of us." And she throws a mean party too!

by Miri Goldstein



The Art Connection's 8-80 Celebration: (above) Douglas Watt, Polly Watt, and Caroline Bird, grandchildren of Fay and Al Chandler. (Below left) Business entrepreneur Al Kapoor and TAC volunteer Alisa Taylor.



Artist Fay Chandler with Mary Coogan, chair of The Art Connection, at the October opening reception for Fay's show of objects at the Sacramento Gallery in Cambridge. In the background: Anna Marie Svedrofsky, a benefactor of The Art Connection. Sales from the show benefited The Art Connection and the Maud Morgan Institute.



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