

# Bringing Art to Life

THE  
art  
CONNECTION

No. 23, Fall / Winter 2009



## Twelve Years and Still Making a Difference

In 1997, Community Resources for Justice (CRJ)'s McGrath House teamed up with The Art Connection and selected 16 artworks for display at their program. Today, the donated artwork is still making an impression.

**“...it is their first exposure to artwork in their living space.”**

To passersby, McGrath House is like many of the buildings in the South End. The three-story row house: its clay-colored façade, enormous windows overlooking Massachusetts Avenue, and black cast-iron fence typify the neighborhood. Inside, Victorian architecture meets institutional reality. McGrath House is a transitional program for women who are completing incarceration and preparing to return to their families and communities.

Women come to McGrath House from prison to lay the foundation for a successful transition. They live at McGrath House for an average of six months, during which time they are required to search for work, attend therapy and counseling sessions, and plan for their return to their communities. Many will also host supervised visits with their children here. It is a transitional home, but a home nonetheless.

Despite its great architectural bones, the dwelling is devoid of color, but for the bold and thought-provoking works of art donated to McGrath House through The Art Connection twelve years ago. The paintings hang in the cavernous common area and the hallways upstairs, transforming the space with artwork, giving the women who live there something to reflect on as they figure out and plan for the next steps in their lives. No doubt, for some of McGrath's residents, it is their first exposure to artwork in their living space. Constance Holden's "Redrocks" is a welcome splash of color in the front entry, an oversized canvas of deep red

*continued on back...*



*Fay Chandler's mixed media on canvas, "Difficult Decision," is hanging at McGrath House in Boston.*

**THE MASTHEAD** features "Sunrise" by JoAnne Hungate. This watercolor, a gift from the artist, was placed at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP) in West Roxbury. MSPP is a nonprofit organization that trains mental health professionals, hosts meetings for neighborhood organizations, and invites individuals from the community to access psychological services.

## The Art Connection, Inc.

539 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02116

Tel (617) 338-7668  
Fax (617) 451-2884  
info@theartconnection.org  
www.theartconnection.org

### Staff

Jim McDonald, *Executive Director*  
Tova Speter, *Program Manager*  
Sarah B. Shallbetter, *Program Coordinator*

### Board of Directors

Lynn Babington  
Michael Bacon  
Elizabeth Boveroux, *Clerk*  
Prilla Smith Brackett, *Vice Chair*  
Fay Chandler, *Founder*  
Kim L. Clark  
Mary Coogan, *Chair*  
Deb Fraize  
David Greenberg  
Carole Gunst  
Amanda Hurd, *Chair Emeritus*  
Tom Johnston  
Julie Rose Novakoff  
Tony Rello  
Robert Savage, *Treasurer*  
Lynn K. Schweikart  
Ildiko Szabo  
Alisa Taylor

The Art Connection is a nonprofit organization that expands public access to visual art by placing the work of donor artists and collectors on the walls of community service organizations. Since its inception in 1995, this unique gifting program has supported 270 agencies in their personal selection of 4000 pieces by 270 artists and collectors. Within these healing environments, the original works of art provide welcome opportunities for reflection, inspiration, comfort, and hope. Copyright © 2009 by The Art Connection, Inc. We welcome your contributions and comments.

This program is supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and by a grant from the Boston Cultural Council, a local agency which is funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, administered by the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism, and Special Events.



# Who is entitled to original artwork?

We recently conducted an evaluation of our program with our art recipient organizations and our art donors. The evaluation gave our partners an opportunity to tell us in their words what they think about us. We are pleased with the responses, and I was most intrigued with a statement from the Boston Living Center, where support services are provided to people living with HIV/AIDS. One of the BLC's members had this to say: "I did not know that we were important enough to have real artwork." Which begs the question: Who is?

We believe that everyone should have access to original art. All the better if we can provide staff and clients in community organizations throughout Boston the opportunity to view a large portfolio of work by a diverse group of local artists and select the work that is meaningful to them to own and display on their walls for everyday viewing and appreciation. We have often been told by excited clients that living with art is a far different experience than visiting with art.

The results of our survey indicate the following: 100% of agencies reported that they continue to love and appreciate their donated artwork. The art we place continues to stimulate conversation, improve staff and client morale, provide opportunity for both reflection and escape, and it helps to make a significant number of people feel good about the fact that they are important enough to have original artwork.

We're grateful to the many art donors who have generously contributed 1,000 original works last year alone. We're also grateful to our financial donors who make our program possible. Without the support of both of these groups, our program would come to a halt, and an incredible abundance of beautiful and provocative works of art might miss the opportunity to astonish.

Who needs access to original artwork? Everyone. With your help, we take the art to the people. We bring art to life. Thank you for your continued support! It is critical to our success.

- Jim McDonald, Executive Director



*Jim McDonald in front of a mixed media on canvas by artist Jo Ann Rothschild from a reception at the nursing department at UMASS, Boston.*

## "Engaging Communities" Mural Project



*The debate over Health Care reform may be raging around the country, but at the Shattuck Hospital in Jamaica Plain, the community has chosen to channel their creativity through The Art Connection's "Engaging Communities" Mural Project. Funded by a grant from the John & Naomi Tomfohrde Foundation and led by artists Tova Speter and Anyablee, patients, nurses, and staff created "Journey," representing themes of hope, metamorphosis, recovery, discovery, and diversity.*

## Survey Says...

The Art Connection recently sent a survey to all agencies that received art in the last 5 years. Here is a sampling of what we found: 100% of agencies responding to the survey continue to be happy with the artwork they selected!

We asked agencies to identify the most rewarding aspect of participating with The Art Connection. **Here are the Top Ten Most Rewarding Aspects noted:**

1. The artwork is inspiring to our clients and staff and truly brightens up their lives on a daily basis. It is wonderful to see the joy and smiles it has brought to our staff, kids, and families.
2. Meeting the artists and people who care about our clients.
3. The feedback from residents about how much they appreciate it.
4. Having our clients be able to experience and enjoy the artwork on a daily basis and having our own private gallery of wonderful variety and originality.
5. The level of professionalism was most rewarding. The artists and everyone at The Art Connection were so generous and helpful. They are doing such a great thing for nonprofits and the community.
6. To have such wonderful work available for clients who rarely have had exposure to galleries or museums.
7. The teamwork in selecting the artwork. The process of creating the group to review and choose the work created a collaboration that was rewarding from beginning to end.
8. The increase in art appreciation and knowledge among our student/client populations as most of them are low income or have very little knowledge of arts from other cultures.
9. The opportunity to display the work of local artists.
10. The impressive selection process, which is fun, but also efficient and educational.

## Recent Art Selections...



*Diana Korzenik, "Stand and Shoot," acrylic on paper, selected by the Malden Senior Community Center.*



*Scott Cahaly, "Face," oil, was selected by the OB/GYN department at The Dimock Center, Roxbury.*

*Julie A. T. McAskill, "Sand Dune II," oil on canvas, was selected by the Newton Housing Authority, an agency providing housing to the elderly, disabled, and victims of domestic violence.*



*Many thanks to Henry Goodrow, who served as board chair of The Art Connection for the past two years, and as a board member for the past eight. Henry brought insightful passion to and a committed investment in The Art Connection. Shown here with Program Manager Tova Speter.*



*Miriam Gilman, "China," mixed media, was selected by the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center.*



*...Twelve Years and Still Making a Difference (...cover story cont'd)*

boulders resting on brilliant blue earth that lends both color and texture to the otherwise non-descript hallway. The sitting room is home to three enormous works of art, including two by artist and Art Connection founder Fay Chandler. These works, "Pro vs. Con" and "Difficult Decision" (pictured on front) bring color, shape and imagery to the room. Black, coral and gray figures mingle in a vague configuration that invites the questions: Who are they, and what is their story? These are questions the women are encouraged to pose to themselves. "Thinking, meditating, dreaming – the sources of my work are as mixed as the materials that go into it,"

Chandler writes on her web site. All of the donated works contribute to reminding the women that they are – almost – home.

"We are so grateful to The Art Connection for these pieces," says CRJ's Tara Dendy, Program Director at McGrath House. The women need structure and support, and Dendy and the staff at McGrath deliver. But just as vital to success for these women once they leave the supervision and support is room to think, contemplate and prepare. The Art Connection makes that possible for the women who call McGrath House home.

– Sally Kerans, Community Resources for Justice

## Work by New Art Donors!



*Roberto "Zach" Castro, "The Autumn is Here," acrylic on wood, placed at NWW Committee for Community Living, Newton Centre.*



*Andrew Fish, "Computer at the Party," mixed media/canvas, placed at North Shore Community College, Lynn.*



*Frances K. Grossman, "North Carolina Mountains," oil on canvas, placed at Rogerson Communities Adult Day Program, Roslindale.*



539 Tremont Street Boston, MA 02116 (617) 338-7668



### HELP US GO GREEN!

We're now sending out quarterly updates via email! Sign up to only receive e-news at our website: <http://tinyurl.com/tacgreen>

# Bringing Art to Life