

# Art Connection facilitates donation of art to senior residence in Brighton

By Jonathan Seitz, Correspondent

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Allston-Brighton - The B'nai B'rith Covenant House in Brighton played host to several Boston-area artists who came out for the dedication of an art donation by Cambridge-based nonprofit the Art Connection.

The Art Connection works to provide public access to art, using painting, quilts, sculptures and other pieces donated by established artists. They typically work with unconventional venues, such as the Covenant House, which, through the B'nai B'rith Senior Citizens Housing Corporation, offers affordable housing to seniors in the Brighton community.

"There's no greater thing for an artist than to have an audience," said Faith Hyde, a Cambridge artist who donated several "pastiche," or caricatures, on display in the lobby. "It's great to be here to meet the audience."

Also present for the dedication ceremony were artists Maria Termini and Anne Silber, who echoed Hyde's sentiments. The residents of the building were also very pleased to be the home for the artists' work.

"These paintings have given me inspiration," said resident Wanda Jordan-Gray, who served on the selection committee and spoke at the opening. "It's something to look forward to every day."

At the commemoration ceremony, Covenant House Property Manager Susan Rack explained that a panel of staff and residents were responsible for selecting the 19 pieces that went on display in the building. While several pieces by Hyde and Silber were on prominent display in the lobby, other were scattered throughout the building, posted near the elevators on each floor.

While 19 pieces were placed in the Covenant House, they are still eligible to receive more in the next year from the Art Connection. The panel had already gone through almost 300 pieces in their selection process.

"We have a huge house, a huge building," said resident Inna Diakova, another committee member. "I think we can find a place for many pictures. Pictures should not stay at home. They need places."

The Art Connection donation was only the most recent art-based activity to take place at Covenant House. In addition to their health and fitness programs, the Covenant House also runs a number of music- and art-based therapy programs, including its biweekly "Arty Afternoon Tea Parties," which bring residents together to help "support and encourage" each other, said Lesley University graduate student Emi Kino, who is pursuing a master's degree in expressive therapy and who runs the sessions.

"Art is like a bridge," Kino said. It can be music or whatever. We use art."

This year, the program has decided to have a showing of some of the artwork done by the tenants of the building, scheduled for April 21, Kino said. In addition to paintings and other crafts, there will also be selections from the motion and balance classes run by the center.

As a property that caters to the diverse group of tenants, including Russian, Chinese, Spanish and English speakers, they try to hold events that cater to all their cultures. As they have in the past, the Covenant House

planned to hold a multilingual Passover Seder for their residents on April 1.

Another popular multicultural event is the annual celebration of Russia's victory over Nazi Germany, held this year on May 8, to honor the numerous WWII veterans from Russia who reside in the Covenant House.

In addition to these projects, there are also ESL classes offered to help residents from different backgrounds learn English, as well as beginner classes in Yiddish.

"It's a dying language, and many of our Russian residents grew up speaking it," said Rack.

Covenant House has also played host to a number of music events in the past, and will continue that trend in this year.

For one, the center has a partnership with the Baldwin Preschool, and students from the school have put on musical presentations for the residents on several occasions as a multigenerational interaction. They will also host two concerts by world-class classical musicians through the Piatigorsky Foundation, a nonprofit group that brings music to places it would not otherwise be heard, on May 6. The show will be open to the public.

Art Connection will continue to distribute its portfolio of more than 700 paintings around the Boston Area. Almost 90 percent of the organization's work comes from artists in Boston.

"The amazing thing about artwork is that you don't need a language to understand it," said Art Connection Program Manager Tova Speter. "Art becomes the language."

Note — Since Covenant House is a secure building, those wishing to see the artwork must be let in by a resident.

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