

QUICK SKETCHES



The founders of the Artists' Fellowship.

A Note From the Artists' Fellowship

Most artists know what organizations to apply to when seeking grants to aid in the creation of a body of work. However, many are less familiar with resources that provide aid to an artist in the case of an emergency, such as the Artists' Fellowship, Inc., which has been in existence since 1859.

The Fellowship was started by a group of compassionate artists and business leaders who recognized the need to assist professional fine artists and their families in times of emergency or financial hardship. The organization's success can be attributed to the all-volunteer board and the devoted advisors, several of whom have served for decades. Half of the board is composed of artists, as mandated by the Fellowship's bylaws. The remainder of the trustees come from an array of

disciplines, including law, medicine, business, and finance. The common denominator for board members is their passion for art. Many are also members of art organizations and through their networks they spread the word about the Fellowship's mission. Each month a meeting is held at the Salmagundi Club, in New York City, and cases from all over the country are reviewed. Applications for aid are reviewed by the Relief and Assistance Committee, and then presented to the full board with recommendations. After discussing each case, the board decides who will receive assistance and how much will be allocated at one time—or, in extreme cases, on a monthly basis. Unfortunately, there are always far more applicants than available funds. The board considers each case carefully, and each applicant's privacy is

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(Left to right) Artists' Fellowship president Babette Bloch, Artists' Fellowship honorees Robert Kipniss and Milton Esterow, and Annette Blaugrund at the 2010 Annual Awards Dinner in New York City.

strictly maintained throughout the process.

There is no expectation of repayment, but it is particularly heartening when recipients contact the Fellowship and share how the aid helped them through a particularly rough time and enabled them to return to work. Take, for instance, the elderly artist whose drawings are always included with an acknowledgment of thanks; or the young artist with a particularly aggressive form of cancer whose grant helped pay for experimental treatments not covered by insurance that have sustained her life and allowed her to continue to work. Such letters are read at every monthly meeting, which is a wonderful way for the trustees to be assured that they are making a difference in an artist's life. Many aid recipients become dedicated members, and others send donations or artwork to show their appreciation.

Membership has increased significantly over the past several years as more artists from across the nation have joined. The Fellowship's endowment has been raised by bequests, donations, and fundraisers, and as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, it is eligible for tax-deductible gifts. Funds have always been conservatively managed, enabling the group to grow and flourish in both prosperous and challenging economic times.

Becoming a member and supporter of the Artists' Fellowship is easy. An application and payment of the annual dues—\$25 for artist members, \$40 for sustaining members, and \$250 for corporate members—is all you need. Anyone who shares our philosophy is welcome to join and is encouraged to spread the word to those in need and potential supporters. Membership is not required to apply for aid, and members are not more likely to obtain aid than non-members. Members receive an annual newsletter with highlights of events and updates on colleagues. Members of all levels are invited to the annual meeting when the trustees are elected and committee chairs report on their activities.



Past presidents Everett Raymond Kinstler, Fay Moore, Alvin Pimsler, and Marc Mellon, along with current president Babette Bloch (second from right).

These opportunities for socializing and involvement in the growth of the Fellowship are very rewarding. Through membership, one also receives an invitation to the annual awards dinner, generally held at one of New York's historic art clubs.

The Annual Medal Presentation Dinner is a gala affair underwritten by generous sponsors that aims to celebrate and share in the spirit of the Fellowship. On these occasions, two awards are given. The Gari Melchers Memorial Award is presented to a person or institution that has materially furthered the interests of the profession of the fine arts. Established in 1945 in memory of the late artist Gari Melchers, this award has been presented to a variety of notable institutions such as The Art Student's League of New York, the Butler Institute of American Art, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and *ARTnews* magazine. The Benjamin West Clinedinst Memorial Medal, established in 1947, honors achievement of exceptional artistic merit. Past recipients include such notable painters, illustrators, and sculptors as Norman Rockwell, John C. Johansen, Leon Kroll, Will Barnet, Jack Levine, Everett Raymond Kinstler, Louise Nevelson, Paul Cadmus, Daniel Greene, David Levine, Bruno Lucchesi, and Philip Pearlstein.

The future of the Fellowship depends upon the continued dedication of associates who understand and appreciate our objectives. The trustees' main focus is raising awareness, particularly among their networks of colleagues who are unfamiliar with the organization, and they seek to broaden the base of sustaining members. As a member, witnessing the dedication of the board and honorary members in their quest to help their colleagues has truly been awe-inspiring. There is also great satisfaction in helping those within our own artistic community who need support at critical times. For more information on applications for membership and to apply for aid, visit www.artistsfellowship.org.

—Wende Caporale, vice president, Artists' Fellowship