

Artists Give Of Their Best For Auction

By MARK ALAN LOVEWELL

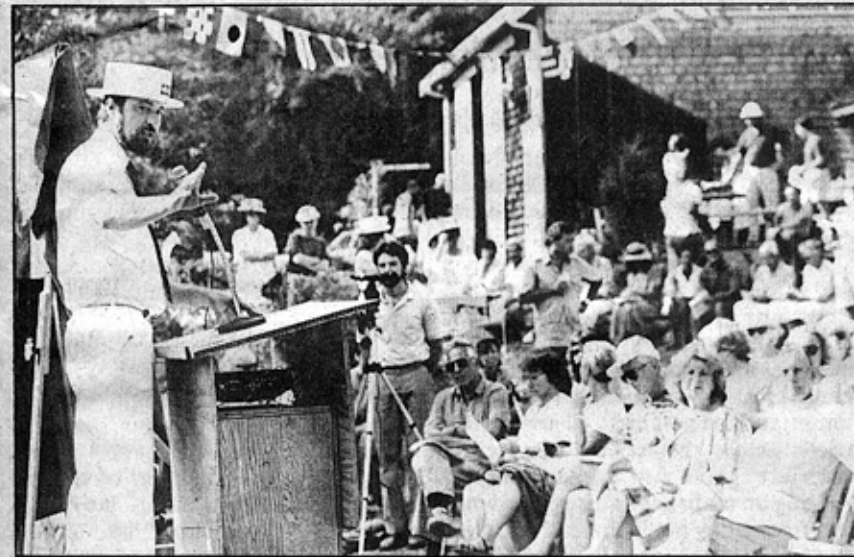
Works by more than 130 artists, representing all mediums from large oils to tiny bronze sculptures, were auctioned Saturday under a sizzling sun at the On the Vineyard Gallery.

The works of art were sold at prices ranging from \$75 to \$2,200. Many were the work of the Vineyard's finest artists, including Stanley Murphy, Ray Ellis and Steve Mills.

West Tisbury gouache painter Albert Alcalay, 71, said: "We as artists are rich in paintings and poor in money. But it is good to donate a painting that, when sold, can help the cause."

The auction was organized to bolster the legal defense fund of the Vineyard Conservation Society, which, with the Citizens for a Livable Island, is waging a legal battle to block construction of a bank and supermarket complex on State Road.

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THEY CAME TO BUY ART AND SUPPORT A CAUSE.



BEVERLY SILLS.

Artists Give Of Their Best For Auction

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According to an organizer of the show, Shirley Feldman of Vineyard Haven, the idea of an art auction started tentatively but quickly took off.

On Friday, many of the artists were gathered at the gallery for a reception. None of them could remember a gathering of artists quite like this one. Nor could any remember a cause quite like the cause to which they were contributing.

"I think it is a great cause and it is good to help," said Mr. Ellis, the Vineyard watercolorist.

"This is for the Island. People don't understand, but we artists have no tax write-off from this. People think this is easy. It is not and all artists should be congratulated.

"Altogether I think artists want to participate in appreciating the Island. We paint here and genuinely appreciate its beauty. But it is time for us to get up off our heels and do something to protect it."

Others said it was fitting to have the auction at the On the Vineyard Gallery, not a mile away from where MVY Realty Trust intends to build a supermarket and bank, the single biggest commercial development in Island history.



MIKE WALLACE AUCTIONS ART.

Pictures by Mark Lovewell

Rez Williams, the artist and a supporting organizer for the event, said: "This is a turning point for the Island. Hopefully artistic people can get others to the point to stand up for the Island. In ways, the citizenry of this Island is quite ahead of the politics. This is one more expression of it."

Lucy Mitchell, Mr. Williams' wife and auction co-organizer, said: "At first it was hard for us to think of asking the artists to give for another cause. But they did."

"The flipside is that the Martha's Vineyard National Bank began some months ago to ask Vineyard artists to submit their work for consideration in the new bank headquarters. This gives people an alternative. Artists need money but they also have strong moral scruples."

Mr. Alcalay, who spent years in German concentration camps before coming to the United States in 1951, said: "Whenever there is some kind of viola-

tion of human values, art always jumps in to help."

On Saturday under a sultry sun, the auction began in the gallery yard. Messengers ran back and forth carrying new works to be shown. Instead of going on a block, each piece auctioned was put on a large easel. Sunlight poured over the heads of those standing at the podium.

Craig W. Whitaker, one of five plaintiffs in the suit challenging the

bank and supermarket plan, said: "We are here to say to you that we are here for the long haul. We think there is an excellent chance that this project, over seven acres of asphalt and tackiness, is simply not going to happen."

"And more important than that, we are hatching a group of professional people and lay people who are more able to deal with the next predator that comes down the road."

Guest auctioneer Mike Levitas of Gay Head tried whimsy to gain higher bids. At a critical part of an auction, he asked: "Is there an author in the house?"

Mr. Ellis' watercolor of a family under a beach umbrella at the beach went for \$1,700.

John Schofield, the professional auctioneer from Dennis, also donated his services for the day.

He later introduced Beverly Sills, and the singer urged bidders on. "The purpose of this auction is not to get a bargain," she said.

A Ned Reade watercolor was sold for \$240. A Monte Becker impressionist painting of a boatyard sold for \$2,300.

Mike Wallace, a television journalist, took over as auctioneer. Under a tightly woven straw hat, he continued.

The volunteers raced back and forth with documents and carrying art work.

Since the start, Mrs. Feldman said: "The response has been just marvelous. It is ten times more than I ever fathomed."

"Douglas Parker, who runs the gallery, had chosen not to use the gallery. He had chosen to take a sabbatical. And he has been working like a dog. Artists kept coming to me. I had two more pieces come in today," she said.

Mrs. Feldman said: "Everybody came at the right time."

Judy Miller of the Vineyard Conservation Society said: "This was a huge undertaking. But it was really justified financially and it was also a demonstration of the community's feelings about the issue."

"I think we did very well and we are happy with the results. It probably would have been larger if the weather had cooperated. The artists should be very pleased."

Mrs. Miller said that the final totals of the auction are not in. On Sunday, a day after the auction, more paintings were sold. "Because we are under litigation, we have been advised by our lawyers never to discuss our financial situation."