



CYNTHIA JOHNSON Age 12 "Vase of Flowers" Oil on canvas 20" x 24"

59/95
MOLLYOLGA: 35 YEARS

MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes
and
Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center
present

59/95 MOLLYOLGA : 35 YEARS

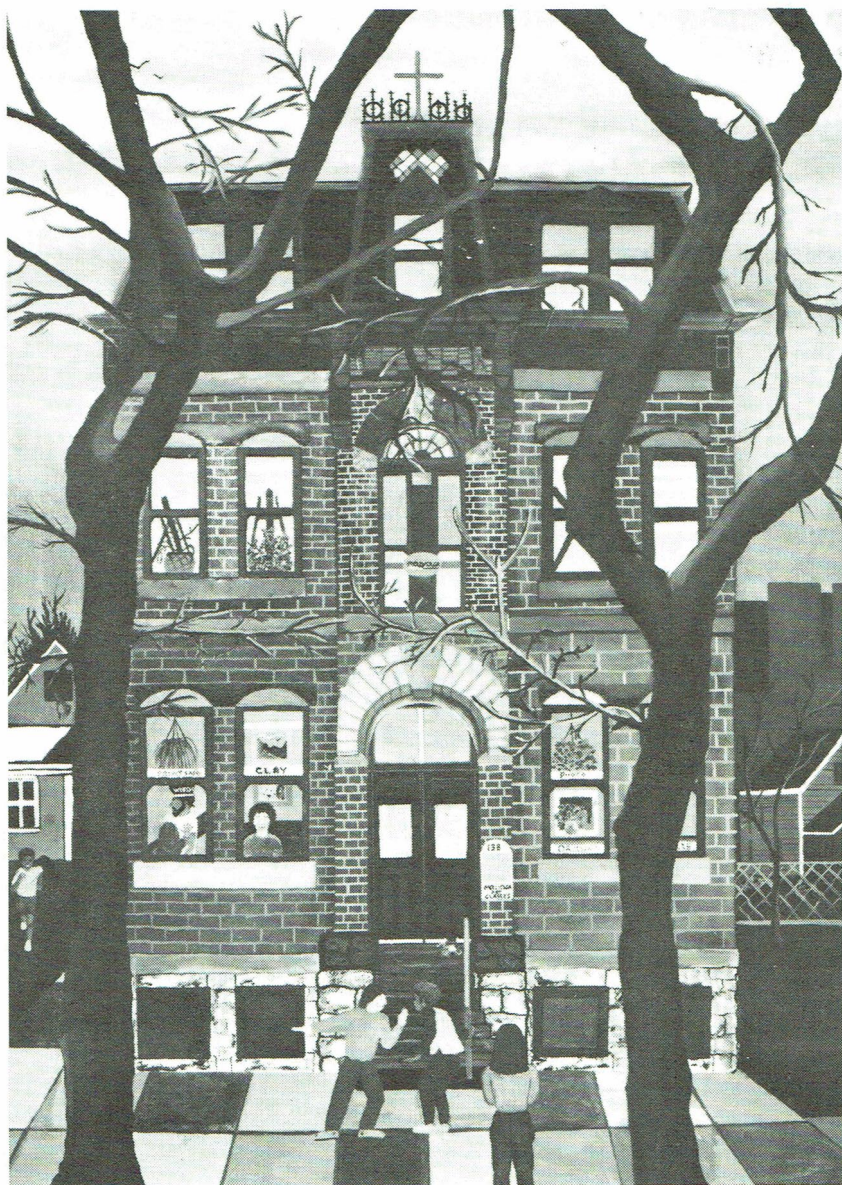
A Retrospective in Five Parts

June 24 - August 12, 1995

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59/95
MOLLYOLGA: 35 YEARS



INTRODUCTION

by Sara Kellner, Exhibitions Curator, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center

Everyone needs a mirror to see themselves in and windows to see the world. Some have only mirrors, and have a skewed view of the world. Some have no mirrors. Some have only windows, and have a skewed view of the world. MollyOlga gives both windows and mirrors."

— Lucille Clifton

For 35 years MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes has offered art classes to children and adults on Buffalo's East Side. Called the Fruit Belt for its streets named after fruit trees (such as Lemon, Peach, Grape and Orange), this predominantly African-American inner city neighborhood has the reputation for being tough. Next to an empty lot once occupied by a church is the former convent that houses MollyOlga. "The solidity of this building — the cold cement stairs, stone foundation, and durable brick structure — provides a metaphor for the constancy that MollyOlga represents in this neighborhood. It has survived adversity of a different sort. Despite rampant funding cuts in arts programs in New York and this country as a whole, MollyOlga continues to offer classes in painting, photography, drawing, and clay to children and adults, free of charge."¹

The long journey of this organization began in 1959 in Molly Bethel's kitchen when children from her East Side neighborhood asked her to teach them how to paint. As a child during World War II, Molly remembers seeing paintings hanging in a window while walking with her mother in Washington DC. This was the Cornelia Yuditsky School of Creative Art, a private art school that evolved out of one of the many WPA art projects. Molly began attending classes when she was nine, and continued at the school until college when she began to teach classes there. This school and its founder helped form Molly's vision of art education.

"Everyone has to learn how to mix their own colors from the primary ones — red, yellow, blue, black and white. And I never assume anyone knows how to mix colors, even if they've graduated from art school. We teach color mixing not by the color wheel. We teach it by vision, by learning to look at a color and being able to visually analyze what's in it and in what proportions. We stress composition as well, from the time they are preschoolers for as long as they are with us."²

When the children and paintings overflowed her kitchen, living room, and porch, Molly moved the artmaking to St. Phillip's Church on Goodell Street. In 1961, Molly contacted Buffalo State College's art education program in search of an assistant, and was joined by Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie. As a freshman at Buffalo State College, she had a course requirement to volunteer outside of the school. She thought that the freedom of how the children were being taught in Molly's classes and how they were encouraged to pursue their own ideas was wonderful. Each

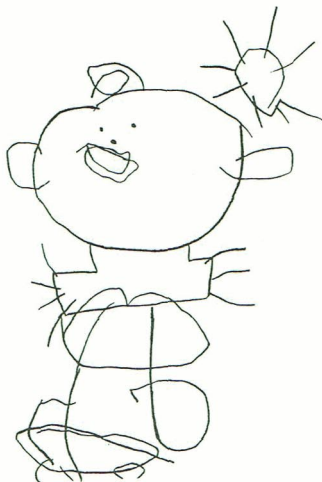
child was recognized as a person with talent and ability, and this positive reinforcement brought the children back again and again. Olga felt so strongly about the critical importance and the joy of teaching children that she stayed.

“Tony was a very macho kid— short, bullish, always looking for a fight...But one day,...he was in the mood to work...He called me over, ‘How’s this look? How’s this look?’ and he was doing a drawing in charcoals and browns — very sophisticated... He just worked so hard, and at the end... I told him what a beautiful drawing he had done and how proud of him I was... and with my finger I made a star on his forehead. His mouth just opened up, his eyes went big, and he said ‘Can anybody else see it?’ and I said, ‘No Tony. You know it’s there and I know it’s there, and that’s what matters.’ The next day, he came into painting class and he...comes close to me and says, ‘Miss Olga, is it still here?’ ... and I said ‘Yes, it is’...”³

In 1971 St. Phillip's was demolished and the classes moved to their current location on Locust Street. At first they rented a few rooms at the St. Boniface Convent. When the nuns moved out three years later after the demolition of their church next door, MollyOlga had the entire building to themselves. In 1980 they purchased the building with money raised solely through donations ranging from 25 cents to \$50.

MollyOlga had started as children's classes, and as the children began to grow up, it was clear that the older students needed space to continue to develop their work in an environment where they could be more independent. After purchasing the building on Locust Street, the teens and young adults were moved to the second floor where they could paint on canvas. The Teen/ Adult classes exploded after this. Parents who brought their kids for classes now stayed to pursue their own visions, and artists in the area gravitated to Locust Street. When the students requested photography classes, Molly turned to Barbi Lare and asked her to develop the program that continues today. After several years the third floor was renovated and turned into studios for the most advanced students. Part of the education that artists received and continue to receive at MollyOlga is how to deal with museums and galleries, legal issues for artists, and portfolio presentation for adults and for high school students applying to college.

MollyOlga students who returned year after year until they were in high school



were often asked by Molly and Olga to work as paid teen instructors after school. Dorothy Harold, who now teaches clay at MollyOlga, started coming to MollyOlga when she was eight. In fact, ten of her thirteen brothers and sisters went to classes with her. When she was about fifteen, she was asked if she would like to work after school helping teach the younger children. She found that she had something positive to teach them; she knew how to mix colors and build things out of clay and develop ideas on her own, and could relay these things to the children. She's proud that she's been able to help so many kids, and that her daughters attended MollyOlga. "Painting and drawing and clay, that's what I enjoyed the most. Black and white kids mixed very well at MollyOlga. Kids don't feel a difference. They just don't feel it. They're just children and they get along so well. The kids who got killed in the Fruit Belt came to MollyOlga. The kids in the gangs came to MollyOlga. I see them on the street and they're still the same sweet little kids." ⁴

Since the very first year, MollyOlga has held the Annual Art Show, a presentation of the best accomplishments made each year by every regular student at the school. The show is a teaching tool; having the work of each student matted and hung with all the other work in the building tells everyone who is creating what they're doing is significant, that it's worth opening the school to the public and having people come look at their work. Lenore Bethel is a teacher in photography. "The art show is the same time every year, so starting the last week in May, people who haven't been around in a while start popping up. They gravitate to the building, not really knowing it's Art Show time, but sensing it. It's like Christmas when people gather with their family; MollyOlga people gather in early June. Like any family, the older people talk to the younger ones like grandparents. Sister Veronica Anne and Clarence Washington are proud to be the oldest students at MollyOlga. Clarence even calls Molly 'young lady'." ⁵ After the opening, the exhibition stays up all year. Walking through MollyOlga's doors, and seeing the artwork covering the walls, people immediately get a sense that they're in a place where everyone's accomplishments are recognized and taken seriously.

In the late 1960's students started to present their work outside of MollyOlga. At first, students had exhibitions at places such as the hallways at Roswell Park. Eventually, students began presenting at professional venues. The first major exhibition of MollyOlga students was *Visions* presented by El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Riviera in 1987. Haitian-born painter Craig Centrié, the director of El Museo, a community-based arts organization on Buffalo's West Side, had been following MollyOlga and felt that this exhibition was a unique opportunity. "Some people had never exhibited their work outside of MollyOlga before. It was a unique opportunity for them to understand what it's like to develop a body of work and get it shown. This increases everyone's self esteem, people go on to make more work, and better work." ⁶

Visions was the first of many exhibitions of MollyOlga students at El Museo. The group and solo exhibitions sponsored by El Museo first presented the work of artists such as Juan Cavazos, Lenore Bethel, Norma Kassirer, Martha Hurley,

Roscoe Jackson, Holly Szafranski, Bridgette Robinson, Teresa Ford, Hardy Lee Wise, Clarence Washington, Kenny Cooper, Jeanette Shropshire, Eric McEntire, Curtis Robinson, and Ricky Gonzalez. Through these exhibitions, MollyOlga artists received support to continue working, and enough recognition to find other opportunities as artists. These artists started being included in important group exhibitions such as *Crossings: Artists and the Underground Railroad* at the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University in 1993, *Honest to Goodness Art* at the Burchfield Art Center in 1988, and *X-Sightings* at the Anderson Gallery in 1992. Currently, MollyOlga has about ten outside exhibitions per year of work by its students.

The 35th anniversary exhibition at Hallwalls is divided into five sections, *Children's Retrospective*, *Teen/ Adult Retrospective*, *Staff Retrospective*, *Photography Retrospective*, and *Nobody Nos Me*. This exhibition is the most comprehensive presentation ever of the artists of MollyOlga, and the first time that the staff — artists in their own right — have exhibited alongside the students.

In the *Teen/ Adult Retrospective*, artists such as Flora Shack, Clarence Washington, Juan Cavazos, and Bridgette Robinson present work which draws from their immediate experiences in a style that some would call "naïve". Much of Cavazos' imagery comes from his life as a migrant worker, painting workers in fields under a hot sun. He also explores the mythology of his religious faith in works such as *Gates of Hell*. Clarence Washington's *Luxury Express* is part of a series of paintings about slavery. The paintings of Kenny Cooper and Alonzo Von Threet are more in the realm of fantasy; in Cooper's *Fantasies of Egypt*, a row of gold Pharaohs hover over the horizon, and a pathway beckons a couple standing in a green field surrounded by exotic animals. The *Photography Retrospective* includes Kenn Morgan's continuing series of portraits, Sister Veronica Anne's examination of nature, and many other explorations in black and white by photography students. The children's paintings and clay in the *Children's Retrospective* demonstrate a dexterity and joyfulness of manipulating paint, color, and imagery that impresses many trained artists.

The *Staff Retrospective* demonstrates the diversity of the artists who teach at MollyOlga. Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie paintings of people and interiors linger in a red light, heavy with a sense of remembrance. The poetic explorations of color continued by Molly Bethel concentrate on simple elements of nature such as water running over rocks. Curtis Robinson's straightforward renderings of neighborhood gathering places explore the culture of the East Side. Lenore Bethel moves easily between photography and painting; her series of bridges range from documentation in black and white to painted geometric abstractions. Sally Denforth's ceramics are highly finished objects that add playful elements to functional objects such as bowls and cups. Barbi Lare's photographs are contemplative, unobtrusive documents of quiet moments. These are only a few of the many wonderful artists who have shared their skills with MollyOlga students.

The final section of the exhibition is *Nobody Nos Me*, an exhibition of the work of MollyOlga students who were casualties of street violence, as well as pictures of the neighborhood by other MollyOlga artists. First presented at the Mazur Gallery by MollyOlga and El Museo in 1993, the exhibition has already been presented in the region several times. Lucille Clifton, the former Poet Laureate of Maryland, contributed her poems to the exhibition. Born in Buffalo, she has known Molly for over 35 years. *Nobody Nos Me* should be seen all over the country. The show looks at the kids who have died as people, not as headlines in the newspaper. The kids who died, who died in violence, were all once children who expressed themselves with color and made beautiful paintings. “7

Consistent artistic communities with a record of artists the caliber of those at MollyOlga are remarkable. Settled in a neighborhood with more than its share of problems, for 35 years this place and its people have been a constant presence. It is not only a place where people can be trained as artists, but a free space in the community. In the center of violence, drugs and gangs, people of all economic, cultural and educational backgrounds come to follow a vision. What began with the request of children to learn how to paint is now an evolved community where all are free to visit, and an alternative way for people to receive an education as artists. As many of us struggle with building community and the changing ideas and role of community, here is the example to follow. Hallwalls salutes MollyOlga's 35 years of service to the community, its unwavering vision of artistic excellence, and the many achievements of its artists.

MollyOlga artists have shown their work extensively throughout New York, including El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Riviera, Anderson Gallery, CEPA Gallery, Hallwalls, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Upton Hall at SUC Buffalo, the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Buffalo Historical Society, the Mazur Gallery at the Polish Community Center, the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, the New York City Showroom of Fisher-Price, and at MollyOlga's own Annual Art Show. In 1985 MollyOlga received the New York State Governor's Arts Award. In 1993, MollyOlga was one of 5 community arts organizations in the United States selected by Harvard University Graduate School of Education's *Project Co-Arts* for an intensive study on educational effectiveness in community arts.

1. From *Safe Havens*, Project Co-Arts, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1994. Reprinted with permission.
2. Molly Bethel quoted in *MollyOlga: Bringing Talent Out of Artists of All Ages*, by Elaine Mancusos, Arts in Buffalo, 1989.
3. Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie. From an interview, June 1, 1995.
4. Dorothy Harold. From an interview, June 8, 1995.
5. Lenore Bethel. From an interview, June 10, 1995.
6. Craig Centrié. From an interview, June 8, 1995.
7. Lucille Clifton. From an interview, June 8, 1995.



BEYOND SILENCED VOICES

by Craig Centrié, Director, El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Rivera

MollyOlga, over the years, has proven to be a most remarkable place. It's not just its history, beginning in Molly Bethel's kitchen some thirty-five years ago, or the fine art and artists it has produced, but also its very special place in the landscape of Buffalo. It is there, at MollyOlga, that I have met some of the most interesting and talented people in the area over my long stay in Buffalo. I've been to a lot of places, but MollyOlga is unique. I have always thought that it was remarkable that for so long a time, MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes could provide dynamic instruction free to anyone who wishes to join the community, whether it's for just a very short time or a lifetime. But "free for all" is what equalizes its varied participants. The sense of community this policy creates is the most special part of MollyOlga.

Until last year, I took that very special sense of community for granted, like the friendship of two old friends who drink coffee and gossip at the kitchen table. It wasn't until I had the opportunity to look at it through the lens of Sociology that I really understood what MollyOlga was all about. (I was, and continue to be, part of a research team out of SUNY Buffalo that is investigating the evolution of two

cities emerging from de-industrialization.)

In many ways, the Fruit Belt appears to be a poor but charming and laid back community on Buffalo's East Side. Like so many things in Buffalo, it masks many of the uglier sides of economic disparity and social marginalization. Even so, MollyOlga's building immediately feels like a safe and welcoming place to be, shaded under many old maples and sturdy in its turn of the century red brick building. In the summer, the nearby fields that once held workmen's cottages become overgrown with red clover; an occasional child meanders down a well-worn path on the way back from some corner store. Somewhere in this place called the Fruit Belt, a long time ago, where German peasants once tried to recreate their homeland, planting fruit trees and cabbage patches, a mother cries for her crack addicted son.

MollyOlga, by contrast, is a remarkable "free space." A place where people of all backgrounds, rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight, conservative or radical, can come and feel like they are home. It is a drug-free, violence-free space that is nonjudgmental. A place where gang members recognize the importance of its place in the community, and allow anyone to come and go without fear. Here, people with little or no formal education can interact with highly educated individuals on an equal basis. The financially struggling walk away with renewed hopes and dreams, while listening to the stories of more privileged participants. The privileged leave with a more developed and personal understanding of the problems and plight of those who continue to struggle. Intellectual conversations flow freely while everyone sculpts, paints, and draws. Most importantly, it's a place where everyone has a voice. And isn't this what good education is about?

For the last thirty years, America has longed for, and searches for, a sense of community it once had in small homogeneous neighborhoods, complete with the corner store that everyone knew so well and the friendly porches peopled with neighbors everyone trusted. Today, it seems our communities are replaced with chain stores and transient individuals you barely get to know, increasing our apathy and suspicions. Although a changing economy and social order will never take us back to those times, there are examples of communities recreated where people care and are giving of themselves. I know that MollyOlga is one of these places. It's a place where the voices of hope and despair are reconciled. Much of this is due to the lifelong work of Molly Bethel and Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie, and the many individuals who have given of themselves unselfishly over thirty-five years. The other part is just simply magic!

HISTORY OF MOLLYOLGA NEIGHBORHOOD ART CLASSES INC.



MOLLY



OLGA

- 1959 • Inner-city neighborhood children request art classes from neighborhood resident and artist, Molly Bethel; classes taught in her home.
- 1959 • Class moves to neighborhood church, with strong support from Rev. Kenneth Curry; original class is Painting and Drawing, Tuesdays, October through May.
 - More than 50 children attend the first winter.
- 1961 • Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie joins Molly Bethel.
- 1966 • Teenage Assistant from student population added to staff.
- 1971 • Classes move to unused convent and schedule jumps to 5 classes/week, 32 weeks/year.
 - Preschool-age Painting added at students' request for younger brothers and sisters.
 - Classes incorporated not-for-profit as MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes, Inc.
- 1973 • First outside exhibit of art from MollyOlga.
- 77-78 • MollyOlga develops and implements a visual arts component for Bennett Park Montessori School (Buffalo Public Schools magnet school).
- 1980 • MollyOlga purchases convent building for cash free and clear, solely with donations (25 cents to \$50.) from students' parents, people in the neighborhood, and other interested people.
 - Teenagers request separate Painting and Drawing classes, now possible with increased space.
 - At request of teenagers, Photography course is developed and taught by Barbi Lare.
- 80-83 • MollyOlga conducts first teacher-training workshops, which continue as a component of MollyOlga's program over the years.
- 81-82 • Second floor of building renovated for studio and darkroom space.
 - Summer classes (primarily Teen/Adult) start at direct request of students.
- 1983 • Sculpture classes begin at request of Teen/Adult students.
 - Third floor improved and opened for studio space.

- 1985
 - MollyOlga's 25th Anniversary Year.
 - MollyOlga receives New York State Governor's Arts Award.
- 1986
 - High-risk Kindergarten and 1st Grade students from Futures Academy begin coming to MollyOlga during the school day for art classes.
 - Program now includes 15 classes and open studio hours.
 - In response to student requests, MollyOlga pursues a third program component: advocacy for advanced students growing towards becoming independent artists, including: art exhibits, portfolio and resume preparation, advisement regarding sales, and programs on the business of art.
- 1987
 - Total children's attendance is now 3685; teen/adult attendance, 2713.
 - *Visions* - MollyOlga artists' first show by El Museo is exhibited, beginning continuing series of exhibitions of MollyOlga artists by El Museo.
- 1988
 - Handicapped students from City public schools begin attending one class a week at MollyOlga during the school day.
 - Outside exhibits, sales and commissions of advanced work accelerate.
- 89-90
 - MollyOlga's 30th Anniversary Year.
 - An endowment campaign more than doubles the Anniversary Fund.
- 1991
 - Fundraising events initiated in response to drastic government cuts to cultural organizations: "Jammin' for MollyOlga", "MollyOlga Gala", photo and print sales.
- 92-93
 - MollyOlga is one of 5 community arts centers, nation-wide, chosen to be studied in-depth by Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Co-Arts (part of Project Zero). 2 researchers from the project observe full class week at MollyOlga, and conduct interviews with students, parents, and staff. In final report of this 2-year research project, MollyOlga is presented as a model of educational effectiveness in community arts.
- 1993
 - *Nobody Nos Me*, circulating exhibition co-sponsored by El Museo, attracts significant attention.
- 93-94
 - Grade 2 is added to Arts-in-Education classes for at-risk children from Futures Academy (see 1986).
- 94-95
 - MollyOlga provides weekly art classes in Schools #31 and #36.
 - MollyOlga's 35th Anniversary Year.
 - 2 major shows highlight the 35th anniversary:
Of the Fruit Belt: Art from MollyOlga at the Buffalo Historical Society
59/95 MollyOlga : 35 Years at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center.

AWARDS & HONORS

- 1978 •New York State Division of Youth Creative Community Award
- 1985 •New York State Governor's Arts Award presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.
- 1987 •New York State Council on the Arts Primary List of organizations particularly important to the cultural life of New York State.
- 1987 •1st Annual Arts Award to a not-for-profit organization for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts in Erie County; sponsored by the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce and the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County.
- 1990 •Resolution by Erie County Legislature honoring MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes, Molly Bethel, and Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie on 30th Anniversary of MollyOlga.
- 1992 •Diamond Award, United to Serve America.
- 1992 •Achievement Award, American Association of University Women, Buffalo Branch. (presented to Molly Bethel and Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie)
- 1992 •MollyOlga is one of 5 community arts centers, nation-wide, chosen to be profiled in-depth by Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Co-Arts (part of Project Zero), as model of educational effectiveness in community Arts. (Final report, *Safe Havens*, published November 1993.)
- 1993 •Founder's Day Award - for contribution to the community in the area of the Arts; Xi Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.
- 1993 •Service to Youth Award, Boys and Girls Clubs, Buffalo

"...when Nelson Rockefeller established our state Arts Council in Albany, another visionary, Molly Bethel, herself a visual artist, decided to begin a program of free instruction in the visual arts for citizens of all ages in Buffalo. A year later, she was joined by another artist, Olga Lownie... These two remarkable women did what some still insist it is impossible to do. They've built a first-class, *free* public art program that teaches students how to use their talents, how to give expression to creative instincts that are a part of each one of us. Over a century ago, a New York poet, Walt Whitman, predicted that the strength of democracy would depend on its willingness to 'circumvent the elites and to call forth the soul-seated vision of its people'. In its own way, MollyOlga does that, empowering a generation of

students with the instrument of art - the force of self-expression. MollyOlga's vision of involving people's lives with art, and art with people's lives, is a quintessential expression of the very best of New York." - Governor Mario Cuomo, New York State Governor's Arts Awards, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, 5/1/85

"Resolved, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby honor and congratulate the MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes on its 30th anniversary of outstanding service to the inner-city and its young people, who otherwise would have had little opportunity to study and learn in the visual arts, and be it further resolved, that this Body wishes MollyOlga many more wonderful years of success as it guides our nation's young people toward the fulfillment of their cherished dreams in the field of visual arts, and be it further resolved, that a certified copy of this resolution be presented to Molly Bethel and Olga Lownie, founders of MollyOlga, in honor of their wonderful achievement...of serving the youth of this community in a most unselfish and generous manner, for which this Body and this community are deeply thankful." - Resolution from Erie County Legislature, 6/7/90

"These three themes — constant survival, the model of the professional artist, and realistic accessibility — are the elements out of which [this portrait of] MollyOlga is constructed." - pg. 56, Safe Havens, report by Project Co-Arts, Harvard Graduate School of Education., November 1993. Reprinted with permission

"[MollyOlga] offers tightly structured arts learning to a loosely structured population... MollyOlga's emphasis falls on ... the premise that every individual is entitled to arts training and the understanding and abilities such experience provides." pg. 12, Ibid.

"MollyOlga itself can be seen as based on a balance between structure and openness, just as the artist's model, as Molly and Olga define it, requires a parallel balance between direction and freedom... The composition of MollyOlga lies in the very specific, purposeful instruction that provides a framework for the nurturance of free creative expression." pg. 64, Ibid.

"MollyOlga is a place where arts learning and visual expression are valued and supported. The simplicity of its organization is heralded as fundamental to the center's ability to serve its community by providing a realistically accessible arena for art-making." pg. 200, Ibid.

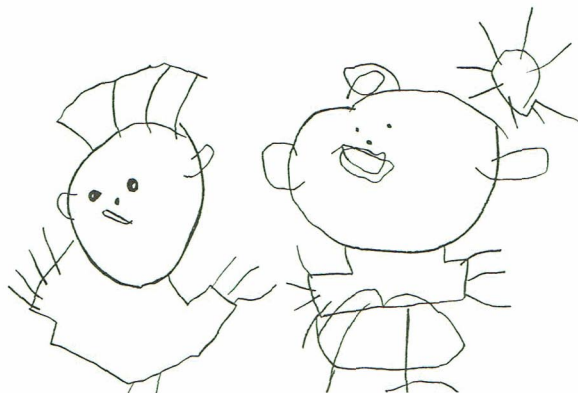
WHAT WE DO

MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes, Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit, arts organization providing free classes in the visual arts of Painting, Drawing, Clay, and Photography. All of MollyOlga's classes are taught by professional artists. Beginning through professional levels of instruction are offered, for ages 3 1/2 through adult. Located at 138 Locust Street, in the Fruit Belt neighborhood of Buffalo, MollyOlga was started in 1959 at the direct request of neighborhood children, and now serves over 350 students each year from all over the Buffalo area. Special classes for particular groups may be contracted.

MollyOlga maintains an active exhibition schedule of work by both children and adults, including an Annual Art Show held in the building, and shows in diverse public venues. Exhibitions present the work of MollyOlga artists to the public, and are the primary means of acquainting the public with the opportunities available at MollyOlga.

In addition to year-round classes, MollyOlga actively develops exhibition opportunities for emerging artists, as well as other forms of advocacy for student artists growing towards becoming independent, practicing artists. These services include: portfolio development, resumé preparation, advisement regarding the sale of art works, and occasional programs of the business of art. MollyOlga also offers teacher-training workshops, slide lectures on children's art, in-house tours, and intensive workshops on particular aspects of visual art. Proceeds from these projects are used to support MollyOlga's basic program. In addition, prints and posters of student work are for sale on a continual, rotating basis, and photographic portraits may be arranged by appointment.

Selected work from 35 years of Annual Art Shows comprises an extensive "permanent collection" of children's paintings, which are available for corporate rental. Work from MollyOlga's permanent collection has been rented by Geneva B. Scruggs Health Center in Buffalo (both Main Street and William Street locations), and Fisher-Price's toy showroom in New York City.





PHILOSOPHY

Throughout our 35 year history, MollyOlga's philosophy has remained constant. We believe that talent should always have a chance to be nurtured and a place to thrive, regardless of ability to pay. Therefore, our visual arts classes are free and open to everyone. Realistic accessibility — in cost, location, and format — has always been a guiding principle.

Instruction at MollyOlga is on an individualized basis. We respect the validity and integrity of each person's creative vision. Students choose their own subjects and develop their own ways of expressing their ideas visually. We help each person develop their creative abilities in ways that are meaningful to that person: to expand aesthetic sensitivity, to learn to *see*, to develop confidence in their own visual ideas and respect for their ideas and the ideas of others. Students learn to expand on their ideas, to identify strengths and problems in their works, to find means to solve their own problems, and to complete their ideas.

Individual discussion with each artist regarding the technical and artistic problems encountered in their work stresses a firm foundation in the basic elements of composition, color, drawing, visual perception, and technical proficiency.

TEACHERS / INSTRUCTORS

Molly Bethel, 1959-95
Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie, 1961-95
Sally Danforth, 1978-95
Barbi Lare, 1979-95
Curtis Robinson, 1985-95
Lenore Bethel, 1986-95
Dorothy Harold, 1976-78 and '90-95

Duncan Bethel, 1985-92
Lenord Bethel, 1974-77
Gail Bobo, 1975-76
Karen Bobo, 1976-80
Kevin Bobo, 1980-81
Lee Mitchell Cisek, 1966-67
Valeria Cray, 1972-75 and '82-85
Dottie Drummer, 1969-74
Carmen Alvarez Feldman, 1977-81 and '86-91
Ricky Gonzalez, 1988-91
Jackie Hamberg, 1984-85
Mary Hart, 1977-78
Martha Hurley, 1985-86
Barbara Insalaco, 1974-89
Roscoe Jackson, 1985-87
Patrick Lavery, 1985-87
Janet Lundeen, 1987-88
Janice McDuffie, 1976-82
Rosalind Kimball Moulton, 1974-76
Dorothy Stallworth, 1972-83
Roberto Pacheco, 1985-92
Larrey Salley, 1987-88
Miriam Stillerman, 1980-81
Earl Wolfgruber, 1977-78

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Teaching Assistants have always been selected from among MollyOlga's students. Most started at MollyOlga as children. Many later became instructors (See *). All have provided first-hand examples to the children of the relationship of art to work and daily life.

Lenore Bethel, 1985-86*
Duncan Bethel, 1981-85*
Gail Bobo, 1975-76*
Karen Bobo, 1974-76*
Kevin Bobo, 1978-80*
Valeria Cray, 1966-70*
Ricky Gonzalez, 1986-87*
Jackie Hamberg, 1982-83*
Dorothy Harold, 1971-75*
Roscoe Jackson, 1983-84*
Curtis Robinson, 1981-85*

Jacqueline Bobo, 1980-81
Barbara Bullock, 1965-66
Steven Currin, 1971-72
Theresa Hinton, 1966-70
Debbie King, 1979-80
Darryl Kyle, 1977-78
Michael Small, 1979-80
O'Neil Smith, 1969-70
Paul McDougald, 1980-84

SUPPORT STAFF

Laura Barniak, administrative 1991-95
Elinor Buxton, administrative 1994-95
Kevin Bobo, 1995

Doug Babington, administrative 1980-81
James Barton, driver 1983-84
Jake Brock, driver 1982-83 & '84-94
Paul McDougald
Eric McEntire, 1986-87
Carmella Sava, administrative 1979-80
Florence Speed, driver 1978-81
Lois Uhteg, administrative 1960-61
Laura Whitman, administrative 1987-90

STUDENT INTERNS

Crystal Arnold, 1983-84
Lester Barrett, 1960-61
Sue Boehm, 1993-94
Margie Burns, 1981-82
Amy Church, 1981-82
Amy Finn, 1984-85
Elaine Ferris, 1970-71
Ana Hammond
Barbara Oertel, 1973-74
Michalene Parker, 1961-62
Pennie Sansone, 1960-61
Ramona Taliaferro, 1972-73
Carol Vogel, 1960-61

THE FIVE PARTS OF THE SHOW

I. Children's Retrospective

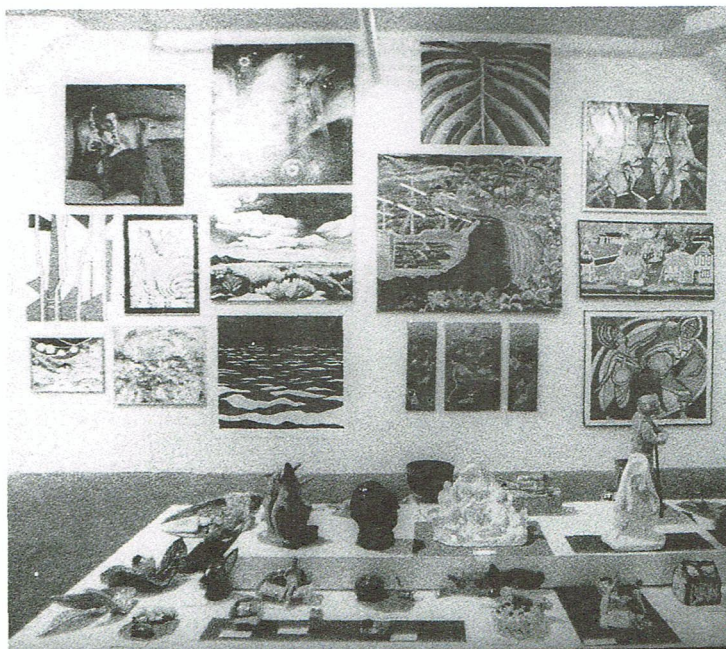
Historically, the crux of MollyOlga's program in visual arts is the Children's Painting Classes. In 1959, neighborhood children from the Fruit Belt asked artist Molly Bethel how to paint. "Painting parties" held in her home quickly began to overflow the space, leading to "Tuesday Afternoon Painting Class" held at a neighborhood parish hall. Fifty children came the first year, requiring additional help with teaching. Artist Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie became involved in 1961, originally as an art education intern from Buffalo State College. Classes were held in the St. Philip's parish hall, with strong support from Rev. Kenneth Curry, before moving to the current building on Locust Street in 1971.

Children's Clay was added to the program in 1966, at the direct request of the children. Classes in Clay provided an opportunity for students to develop skill in a new medium and explore three-dimensional form, while continuing to work on finding ways to communicate their ideas visually.

Separate painting classes for children of preschool and kindergarten age were added in 1971, at the request of children who were bringing their younger brothers and sisters. Preschool Painting classes provide instruction for children as young as three and a half.

Some of the young artists represented in this retrospective attended MollyOlga for one or two years, and the creation of completed works of art was an achievement of lasting significance. Others continued to deepen their relationship with art and with MollyOlga through the teen/ adult classes, enriching their communities through their work as artists. Some developed portfolios at MollyOlga, which earned them admission to high school and college art programs. Some became teenage assistants, and later instructors at MollyOlga. Frequently, alumni of the early Children's Painting classes bring their own children to MollyOlga today.

From 35 years of Annual Art Shows, comprised of the best of each student's work from year to year, pieces have been selected and saved, resulting in a large "permanent collection" of children's art. The *Children's Retrospective* represents some of the best work from the permanent collection.



II. Teen/Adult Retrospective

Teen/ Adult studio classes evolved naturally in the late 1970's, as students progressed beyond the children's classes and requested ongoing opportunities to continue learning and making art. Purchasing MollyOlga's building created the opportunity for separate Teen/Adult studio spaces, conducive to serious involvement with art on a long-term basis. The individualized format of responsiveness to each student artist's strengths and personal vision, results in many artists developing their art at MollyOlga for long-term periods — frequently many years.

Teen/Adult artists at MollyOlga engage in processes which are crucial for the serious artist: developing intensive, self-motivated work habits; honing an individual mode of visual expression; creating a substantial body of work; developing a portfolio; and managing the "business" of art, including exhibition, sales, and commissions. As they gain experience and increase their skill and vision, student artists at MollyOlga make the important transition to becoming professional artists in their own right.

Many of the artists represented in this *Teen/Adult Retrospective* have exhibited in one-person, two-person, or group shows in various public venues — adding fresh, otherwise unheard voices of the cultural life of the area. Their collective achievements have never before been celebrated in a public exhibition of this scale.



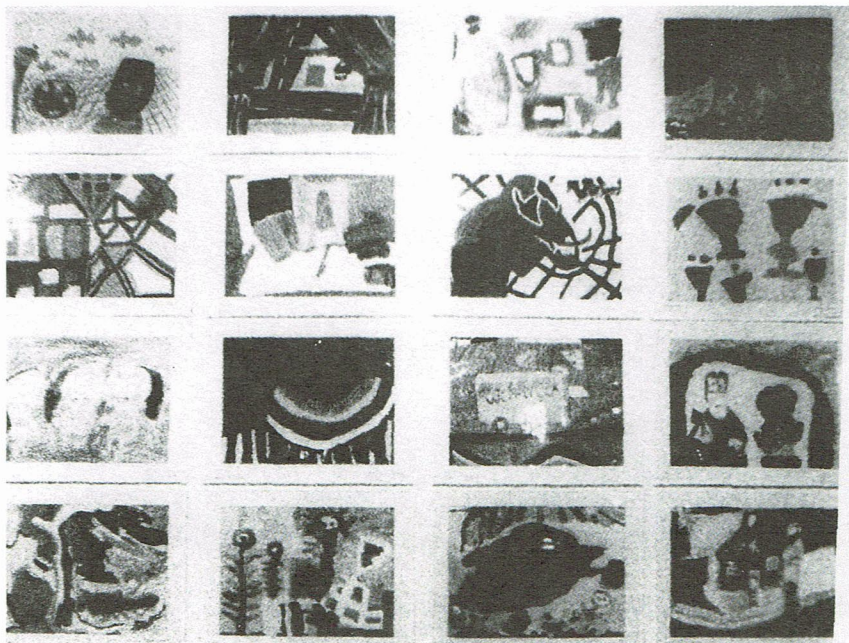
III. Photography Retrospective

Photography instruction at MollyOlga began in 1980, as a natural extension of developing visual intensity and aesthetic sensitivity in a two-dimensional format. Barbi Lare originally developed and taught the Photography classes, in response to direct requests from Teen/ Adult students.

Photography is an appropriate medium for developing the basics of visual art; learning to *see*, aesthetic sensitivity, composition, technical skill, and the development of a unique personal vision all play a part. Looking through a lens is the equivalent of training the eye in other media to achieve aesthetically strong compositions.

The initiation of photography at MollyOlga also led to an ongoing documentation of the life of the building, creating an important visual record which would not otherwise exist.

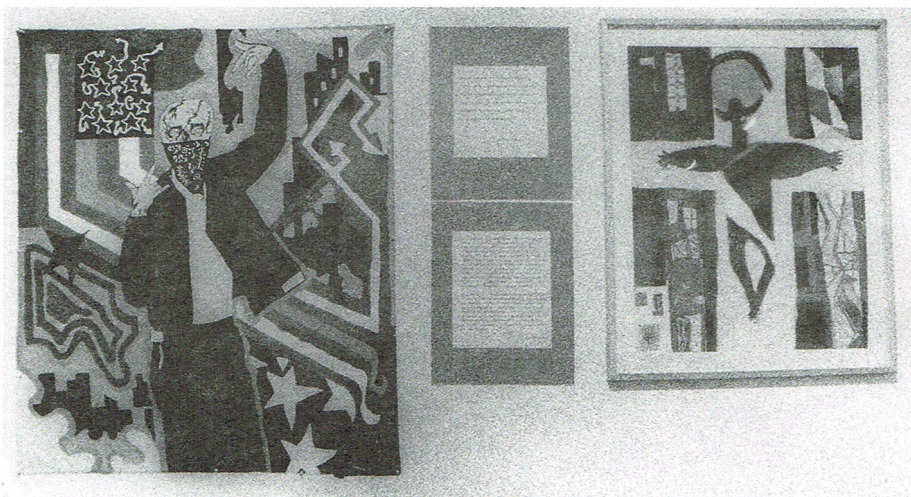
Since the first class of four students with one enlarger, darkroom facilities have been expanded to accommodate many more students and advanced work. Photography has grown to become an integral part of MollyOlga's program, as witnessed in this retrospective.



IV. Staff Retrospective

Many talented artists have taught at MollyOlga over the years, providing a wealth of knowledge and experience, both aesthetic and technical, as the base for teaching and learning. The range of talents and scope of artistic vision in this retrospective attest to the quality of a working environment at MollyOlga which has supported the growth of hundreds of young and emerging artists in Buffalo.

Nurturing the artistic skills and imaginations of future generations is a time-honored vocation among established artists, and an important contribution to the whole community. One reason MollyOlga has survived and thrived for 35 years is that so many artists have dedicated their remarkable talents to helping its students pursue and achieve artistic excellence. The 35th Anniversary *Staff Retrospective* highlights the work of the artist-teachers who have become integral to the history of MollyOlga. Some taught at MollyOlga for a season, others for years, still others for decades. The quality of MollyOlga's program of professionally-taught visual art instruction rests on their individual and collective contributions.



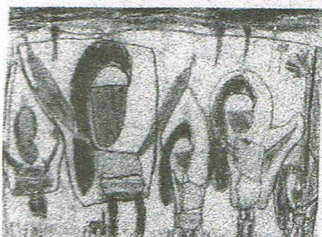
V. Nobody Nos Me

Nobody Nos Me remembers former MollyOlga students from Buffalo's East Side whose lives were cut short by violence. The show is comprised of artworks created by the children at MollyOlga; newspaper clippings reporting their deaths; written commentary by Dr. Jesse Nash Jr.; poems by Lucille Clifton, a celebrated poet and native of Buffalo's near-East Side; and paintings of the neighborhood by other neighborhood children.

After the shooting death of one of the youths whose work is represented in the show, the idea for *Nobody Nos Me* began to germinate. The material collected for its curation proved copious and compelling. Taken in as a whole, the *Nobody Nos Me* show brings home the fact that the youth who were killed were not victims from birth, but began their lives with creativity and hope in good measure. MollyOlga's fundamental objective has always been to see that such talent finds expression and does not go to waste.

As co-sponsor, El Museo Francisco Oller Y Diego Rivera began to circulate the exhibition in 1993. Showing for the first time in Mazur Gallery at the Polish Community Center, *Nobody Nos Me* has been seen in diverse public venues such as the Buffalo Historical Society, the Buffalo Zoo, Buffalo Traditional School (for the African World Youth Conference), Buffalo Seminary, and the Buffalo Museum of Science.

Nobody Nos Me uses the powerful medium of art to bring awareness and thoughtful attention to the circumstances faced by inner city youth.



"*Nobody Nos Me* tells the story the Buffalo crime blotter never gives, in what may be the country's first art show of its kind. These gifted young victims' vivid photography and paintings powerfully bring home what Buffalo's poverty and street slaughter are all about... In this context, the kids' art becomes steel, their death the forge to craft weapons in the war on deprivation and ignorance. In *Nobody Nos Me*, the deceased artists shoot back." - Louise Continelli, The Buffalo News. 1/30/94.

"This archive, this testament to the bloodshed on our streets, 'makes it real and sad, in front of us in a way that we might otherwise not know... it makes us see it and feel it...For more than three decades, MollyOlga has been a lifesaver for a lot of people'" Dr. Diane Christian, SUNY Buffalo English professor, filmmaker, and member of the Erie County Cultural Resources Advisory Board, quoted by Louise Continelli in The Buffalo News, 1/30/94

"Two recent public events brought home to me the hazardous future of Buffalo's children and the harsh reality they face...The second event...a display of art and photography at the Historical Society, the work of children all now dead from violence...has unspeakable power... In the words of children who survive and from the hands of those taken, we are asked to abandon our ideological differences, our seemingly meaningless debate over conservative disinterest versus liberal placebos, and merely grant them the dignity of opportunity. They deserve all we can give them." Kevin Gaughan, Buffalo News, 2/12/94

EXHIBITORS

CHILDRENS RETROSPECTIVE

Painting and Drawing

Lakin Adams, Ages 5 & 9
Shawn Albert, Age 8
Tommie Alford, Age 10
Dion Anderson, Age 7
Rachel Arnold, Age 4
Lashari Bailey, Age 5
Chris Banks, Age 5
Ebony Banks, Age 8
Linda Barber, Age 9
Max Bennett, Age 5
Jason Benton, Age 5
Johnny Benton, Age 13
Matthew Bernard, Age 11
Lisa Berry, Age 8
Sky Bethel, Age 4
Charlotte Biltekoff, Age 9
Stacy Biltekoff, Age 10
Allen Bobo, Age 9
Dion Bobo, Age 6
Imaris Borrero, Age 4
Lauren Braun, Age 11
Barry Broom, Age 12
Christy Brown, Age 5
Nicole Brown, Age 4
TerranceJay Brown, Age 5
Essence Bryant, Age 9
Sarah Buckley, age 4
Susan Buscaglia, Age 9
Nichole Carper, Age 6
Vincent Carver, Age 7
Joe Crawford, Age 14
Andre Cromwell, Age 4
Danny Cotter, Age 6
Matthew Daniels, Age 5
Daniel Davis, Age 9
Julia Dawkins, Age 8
Clinton De Souza, Age 5
Sheila Dixon, Age 9

Eric Doss, Age 5
Willis Easton, Age 6
Amanda Enger, Age 9
Jean Ewin, Age 11
Latoi Ferguson, Age 5
Haneefah Fields, Age 11
Avionne Fortner, Age 9
Autumn Frost, Age 3
Nicholas Gana, Age 4
Jeremy Gleave, Age 4
Shelia Goer, no age
Mark Gorski, Age 5
Sabrina Gross, Age 8
Petra Hall, Age 6
Una Hanubal, Age 4
Pamela Harold, Age 14
William Harold, Age 7
Bobby Harris, Age 7
Juanita Harris, Age 6
Rachel Herman, Age 7
Desiree Hernandez, Age 5
Misha Hoffman, Age 10
Clytemnestra Holland, Age 9
Cortrell Hornsby, Age 7
Paul Humphrey, Age 9
Edward Johnson, Age 7
Robyn Jane Johnson, Age 9 & 10
Maureen Keefer, Age 7
Dwynell Kelly, Age 8
Philip Kerr, Age 5
Kristen Kifner, Age 11
Erik Kohler, Age 8
Elizabeth Korona, Age 6
Rebecca Lare, Age 4
Jason Lin, Age 5
Alexi Lownie, Age 8
Anyia Lownie, Age 7
Quincy Loynes, Age 9
Saral Ludwig, Age 9
Nicole Martin, Age 7
Gerald McDuffy, Age 7
Luke McKay, Age 7
Damore McNamee, Age 7
Nichole Miles, Age 7
Erin Militello, Age 6
Darryl Mines, Age 11

Carl Miller, Age 10
 Spencer Mitchell, Age 5
 Ericka Morse, Age 10
 Veronica Mozee, Age 8
 James Nelson, N.A.
 Latonya Nelson, Age 9
 Dean Newsome, Age 14 and Age 12
 Peter Nguyen, Age 5
 Thonh Nguyen, Age 4
 Ricky Orellana, Age 5
 Randy Pietkiewicz, Age 7
 Justin Pitts, Age 6
 Leah Prentis, Age 9
 Deirdre Prewitt, Age 6
 Celisse Randolph, age 5
 Shalita Rivera, Age 5
 Kervette Roberson, Age 6
 Caledonia Robinson, Age 12
 Miguel Rojas, Age 6
 Rebecca Rom, Age 5
 Paul Salamon, Age 4
 Terressa Sepelveda, Age 4
 Marlon Shallowhorn, Age 8
 Amanda Shero, Age 10
 Lydell Slaughter, Age 12
 Herbert Small, Age 8
 Paul Small, Age 12
 Marion Smith, Age 13
 Ronnie Sommerville, no age
 Stephanie Stokes, Age 6
 Velane Stokes, Age 14
 Ryan Syharat, Age 5
 Salley Thomas, Age 5
 Amina Tillet, Age 6
 Abbey Unger, Age 9
 Suzanne Volcy, Age 5
 John Webb, Age 5
 Rodney White, Age 10
 Anthony White, Age 6
 Delana Williams, Age 8
 Eve Williams, Age 6
 Todtrese Williams, Age 4
 Shamika Wolf, Age 6
 Michael Young, Age 10

Clay
 James Adams, Age 9
 Lakin Adams, Age 9
 Corrie Allen, Age 8
 Samantha Anderson, Age 9
 Yemi Arwolo, Age 8
 Rebecca Arnold, Age 8
 Darran Booker, Age 11
 Clifford Boone, Age 8
 Brandy Broadus, Age 10
 Raquel Brown, Age 10
 Carmelita Burgos, Age 10
 Michael Burton, Age 12
 Sherika Carpenter, Age 10
 James Cherry, Age 9
 Louis Collins, Age 7
 Andrew Colopy, Age 10
 Karen Cox, Age 9
 Kellen Crawford, Age 10
 Hannah Creeley, Age 8
 Dan Crowley, Age 11
 Megan Crowley, Age 11
 Candace Crump, Age 8
 Christine Cynkar, Age 12
 Matthew Daniels, Age 9
 Paris Daniels, Age 10
 Lindsay DiStefano, Age 10
 Laura Dombkowski, Age 8
 Niki Ervin, Age 9
 Michael Gates, Age 9
 Sabrina Gross, Age 8
 Max Grundy, Age 8
 Clarese Hargro, Age 9
 Jeanette Hall, Age 13
 Janine Hall, Age 11
 Lamondra Hall, Age 12
 Tiffany Hall, Age 8
 Juanita Harris, Age 9
 Rickita Harris, Age 9
 Rachel Herman, Age 11
 Clytemnestra Holland, Age 9
 Corey Hunter, Age 9
 Larry Jackson, Age 11
 Gordon Keen, Age 10
 Dorian Kelly, Age 11
 Dwyne Kelly, Age 7

Electa King, Age 11
Kenneth Kuhn, Age 8
Henrietta Leonard, age 11
Dwyane Lewis, Age 12
Keeley Lumadue, Age 9
Lakiesha Love, Age 10
Anya Lownie, Age 11
Sherry McAster, Age 14
Santia McEntire, Age 9
Kate Militello, Age 8
Aquila Mines, Age 12
Jesse Morgan, Age 8
Monaca Morgan, Age 12
Lisa Murawski, Age 12
Leah Prentiss, Age 10
Robert Reid, Age 13
Atoya Roland, Age 10
Darryl Slaughter, Age 10
Lydell Slaughter, Age 12
Tammy Slocum, Age 10
Marla Smalls, Age 11
Ronnie Smith, Age 12
Tony Smith, Age 7
Anthony Steele, Age 10
Jessie Steffan, Age 10
Michael Stockton, Age 8
Selima Taylor, Age 10
Tiffany Taylor, Age 12
Lacretia Thomas, Age 8
Joseph Tyler, Age 11
Joseph Tyler, Age 11
Randi Watkins, Age 9
Anthony Watson, Age 7
Elizabeth White
Jeffrey White, Age 10
Maria Van Wyck, Age 10
Jasmine Williams, age 9
Lakiesha Williams, Age 11
Todtrese Williams, Age 7

STAFF RETROSPECTIVE

Molly Bethel
Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie
Sally Danforth
Barbi Lare
Lenore Bethel
Dorothy Harold
Curtis Robinson
Kevin Bobo

Carmen Alvarez Feldman
Duncan Bethel
Lenord Bethel
Barbara Bullock
Valeria Cray
Jacklyn Hamberg
Barbara Insalaco
Roscoe Jackson
Patrick Lavery
Janice McDuffie
Rosalind Kimball Moulton
Roberto Pacheco
Dorothy Stallworth
Earl Wolfgruber
Sue Boehm (intern)

TEEN/ADULT
RETROSPECTIVE

Patricia Allen
Jimmie Baker
Gail Bobo
Karen Bobo
Kevin Bobo
Lauren Braun
Andre Brooks
Holly Brown
Nathan Byrnes
Juan Cavazos
Craig Centrie
Meei Chang
Andy Chou
May Chou
Kenny Cooper
Marc Connelly
Julia Dombrowski
Greg Donner
Jeanne Ebling Laing
Amy Fields
Molly Flynn
Terresa Ford
Kristianne Fulcher
Susan Goss
Jeanne Johnson
Nancy Johnson
Dorothy Harold
Shirley Harrington
Ann Herman
Martha Hurley
J.L. Ivey
Cynthia Johnson
Desti Jones
Norma Kassirer
Alison Kurek
Alfred Lafayette
Karen Magee
Irma Malcolm
Eric McEntire
Clarence McNair
Eileen McNamara
Joseph Michaud
Cindy Morgan

Alton Newkirk
Kathy Pisaro
Sue Reuss
Delores Reynolds
Bridgette Robinson
Caldonia Robinson
Joan Robinson
Liz Schlegel
Salagram Sila
Flora Shack
Jeanette Shropshire
Kathy Simonds
Terry Simpkins
Ann Stievater
Liz VanVerth
Alonzo Von Threet
Beatrice Vandenberg
Sharon Walker-Doerr
Clarence Washington
Lisa Williams
Hardy Lee Wise

PHOTOGRAPHY
RETROSPECTIVE

Sister Veronica Anne

Armao, SSJ

Roland Autry

Linda Basil

Shearie Batt

Johnny Benton

Carl Blackman

Lauren Braun

Chrystal Brown-Andrews

John Burnis

Dick Byrnes

Nathan Byrnes

Eddie Calhoun

Rosemary Caputi

Ernest Carlson

May Chou

David Coleman

Sara DiThomas

Ellen Eberhardt

Ty Edwards

Glenda Evans

David Fisher

Montina Flippen

Kristianne Fulcher

Roseanne Fulcher

Sister Diane Gianada

Lori Griffe

Brenna Griffin

Diane Galuchi

Maureen Henderson

Hope Herman

Edith Holt

Ginny Houston

Iantha Jackson

Karen Jagelle

San Jardine

Nancy Johnson

July Johnson

Desti Jones

Sara Kellner

Vincent Kzukiewicz

C.B. LaGrange

Jerome Greenburg

Bob Larson

Addie Levine

Jim Long

Anya Lownie

Terra Lynch

Julian Macy

James McNear

Phyllis McNear

Cathy Miller

Rosemary Miller

Kenn Morgan

Fran Morgante

Dean Newsome

Mary Jane Oliveri

Alice O'Malley

Christina Paszkowsky

William Perry

Natasha Plenty

Gerald Perkins

Wendy Potts

Karen Plummer

Helen Punders

Dorothy Rissel

Carlos Rivera

Caldonia Robinson

Curtis Robinson

Henry Rollins

Maria Rosa Allen

Sue Reuss

Maureen Satchell

Jeanette Schneider

Flora Shack

Sarah Skorupski

Antoine Smith

Rachel Smith

Owen Stuart

Margie Szegda

Holly Szyfranski

Gail Testa

Josephine Thomas

Dung Trong

Liz VanVerth

Maria Van Wyck

Clarence Washington

Ennis White

Alexandra Whitman

Nell Whitman

Todtrese Williams

Scott Wilson

Gary Wodowski

Rinaldo Zinobile

Gloria Zona

NOBODY NOS ME

Gary Jeter
Ricky Minor
Johnny Steele
Dionne Williams
Tony Williams

Duncan Bethel
Corvette Johnson
Nicholas McNamara
Darryl Stevenson

Poetry: Lucille Clifton
Commentary: Dr. Jesse Nash, Jr.

Neighborhood section

Jacqueline Bobo
Kevin Bobo
Nora Bobo
Nicholas Copeland
Joe Crawford
Carlton Ford
Clarence Gibson
Patricia Gibson
Anita Green
Dorothy Harold
Timothy Jones
Kimberly Kirkland
Darryl Mines
Delores Nelson
Elizabeth Palmer
Willie Pulliam
Curtis Robinson
Darius Sikes
Herbert Small
Joe Neil Smith
Kendra Thompson
Aleisha Turner
Annie Ward
Delana Williams
Tammy Williams
Todtrese Williams
Eugene Wine
Benjamin Witherspoon
Gregory Witherspoon

TESTIMONIAL QUOTES ABOUT MOLLYOLGA

"MollyOlga is a unique Buffalo institution, a neighborhood art school that in reality is much more — an artists' environment that has fostered a community of working painters, sculptors, and photographers whose unique visions often relate directly to real events and locations in the region. Much of the work from MollyOlga presents a sense of local identity that has the power to touch the viewer new to the area... [The advanced students'] work is completely professional. For those, then, that remain in the school, there is a transition that occurs, from student to artist, and from school community to artist community. This is both exciting and almost unique among educational institutions in America." — Barbara Lattanzi, former curator at Hallwalls, *Politics of Information* catalogue, Hallwalls, 3/87

"Experiencing MollyOlga for the first time is extraordinary. Step into the front hall, and you inhale the heady fragrances of paint, turpentine, wet clay, and freshly cut wood. The smells mix with the sounds of conversation, laughter, hammering, and radio music. Add the splashes of bright colors on the walls hung ceiling-high with children's paintings, and its likely you'll feel, as I have, that you've somehow stumbled into the very center of the creative process itself, where seeing, hearing, and feeling are no longer completely separate events ... That so many people of diverse backgrounds, ages, races, and religions work together in peace while being 'gently encouraged to follow their own paths', as Buffalo News critic Richard Huntington has put it, suggests that something powerful is happening here." — Norma Kassirer, "MollyOlga", Buffalo Spree, Summer '92.

"Around the corner on Locust Street, in the old St. Boniface nunnery, is one of Buffalo's most inspiring institutions. Known as MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes,...the school is extremely casual and friendly, the old building warm and slightly disheveled....Where art and children transcend race, color and creed, MollyOlga is building bridges, creating new gates for this old neighborhood." — Mark Goldman, City on the Lake, pg. 296-97, 1990. Reprinted with permission.

"What's a MollyOlga? Well it's art classes, and it's creativity set free, and it's 20 years of dedication, and it's two special women. There's a peach of a place on a narrow one-way street in the Fruit Belt section of Buffalo." — Brenda Cawthon, Buffalo Courier Express, 9/23/79.

"In the heart of the city, there's a small brick building that acts like a beacon, drawing children and adults to take up a brush and paint what they see and feel." — Rose Ciotta, The Buffalo News, 11/9/92.

"A truly remarkable group are the MollyOlga people. Art organizations get an underground reputation for doing (or quite frequently, not doing) what they say they will do. MollyOlga's reputation is pristine." — Terry Doran, "What's In It For

Children", Lively Arts, The Buffalo News, 2/14/76.

"Visiting the school during the 29th Annual Art Show I was struck not just by the color, shape, form, or creativity of each work, but by the glimpse into the heart of the young artist each piece gives." Elaine Manusos, "MollyOlga: Bringing Talent Out of Artists of All Ages" Arts in Buffalo, 6/89.

"A Neighborhood Art Explosion — Every spring there is an art explosion like no other in Buffalo when MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes holds its annual exhibition of student work...At the core of the MollyOlga philosophy is a kind of idealistic social democracy that says that given half a chance the individual will come through with something surprising if not startlingly original. It is a place where children and adults alike are gently encouraged to follow their own paths." — Richard Huntington, *Gusto*, The Buffalo News, 6/2/89

"The MollyOlga School of Buffalo Art. The founders of the school, Molly Bethel and Olga Lownie, have probably introduced more people — people who might not have otherwise picked up a brush — to art than any two individuals in the city. The results of their teaching are always engaging, sometimes astounding. There were paintings by teenagers in a show at Goldome Gallery that would have made Matisse envious of the clarity of drawing and color. And a small exhibit by MollyOlga students included powerful paintings which had more social conscience than 100 paintings produced closer to the usual art channels." — Richard Huntington, *Gusto*, The Buffalo News, 6/3/88

"The free classes are an integral part of the mission of MollyOlga, for it strives to create an environment of art that is realistically accessible for all." — GAP Magazine, Washington, DC, 1985.

"I don't know if I would have finished the degree without this place...I've had a better experience here than in any other art program. They let you pursue your ideas here. Too much instruction involves copying someone else's ideas." — Jackie Hamberg, art education graduate from Buffalo State College, quoted by George Sax, The Buffalo News, 6/85

"I painted at MollyOlga for four years. My life and growth at MollyOlga has been the most important part of my development as an artist." — Martha Hurley, New York City, *Visions* catalogue, El Museo, 4/87

"The MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes have interested me greatly for many years. The high quality of the work produced in the classes is evidenced in the annual exhibitions of drawings, paintings, and ceramics. These creative works of art reveal a sound philosophy and excellent teaching methods....Both Molly Bethel and Olga Lownie are talented teachers with excellent training and experience. This program provides the East Side of Buffalo with an outstanding cultural opportunity." — Gordon M. Smith, Director Emeritus, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo,

NY, letter, 1970's

"I truly enjoyed the opportunity I was afforded to visit your facility. I found it to be well maintained and efficiently administrated...The service your school provides enriches the lives of many of this city's residents. I wholeheartedly support MollyOlga's visual art classes." George K. Arthur, President, Buffalo Common Council, letter, 5/18/89

"Often it is difficult to decide which groups deserve funding from the State. In the case of MollyOlga, the decision is easy. For many years you have contributed a great deal of educational and and artistic services to our community." Arthur O. Eve, New York State Assembly, letter, 5/18/89

"The Buffalo City School District has enjoyed a cooperative working relationship with MollyOlga throughout the implementation of a number of arts-in-education projects. The success of these projects has been well documented." Victor Lama, Curriculum Specialist, Buffalo Public Schools, 6/25/85

"...we have been consistently pleased with the professionalism of the programs as well as the concern for and caring attitude toward the children who participate. The [Erie County] Youth Board originally became involved with MollyOlga because they were impressed by what you have done for so long with so little. The intervening years have fully justified their faith in your organization in every respect." — Joseph Maiorana, Executive Director, Erie County Youth Board, letter, 9/3/76

"You do marvels with children and have demonstrated much patience and perseverance at times of difficulty." — Sister Gracille, Catholic Charities, memo, 11/6/85

"At Baker Hall, I have witnessed the positive growth that the children we send to the Art Center experience...The MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Center is a wonderful community experience for our children. The expression that art lends itself toward is an experience that has many positive effects on our clients." — Joseph Cozzo, Baker Hall (serving at-risk youth), letter, 6/22/90

"I am always impressed by your facility and the student's work...The way that the program gives so many young people a chance to express themselves and develop self-esteem are often a deciding factor in influencing the lives of those young people." — Paul A. Zebrowski, Program Coordinator, Erie County Department of Youth Services, letter, 6/6/84

"It says something very special to us here at St. Boniface Church — that such a program exists in this neighborhood and is available to all children, youth and adults in order to bring out a special talent given by God which might otherwise have never been developed. I also guarantee that the women and men who work in

this program...have a special dedication to this special talent...There is no doubt that through the teachers, the students have come forth, willingly and faithfully because of the individual attention each student enrolled receives." — Sister Philip Marie, St. Boniface Rectory, Buffalo, NY, letter to the NEA, 11/9/76

"We in the community, have found through enrolling many of our children that they have talents that we as parents have overlooked... Our Block Clubs, along with other interested parents feel honored to have an Art School in our community." — Florence Speed, President, Locust and Mulberry St. Block Clubs, Buffalo, NY, letter, 10/26/80

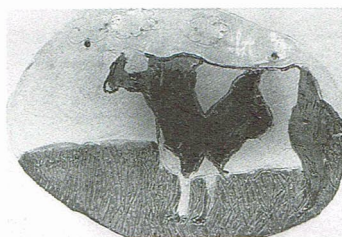


Children Outside Molly Olga, Photo by Lenore Bethel





Irma Malcom, *MollyOlga*

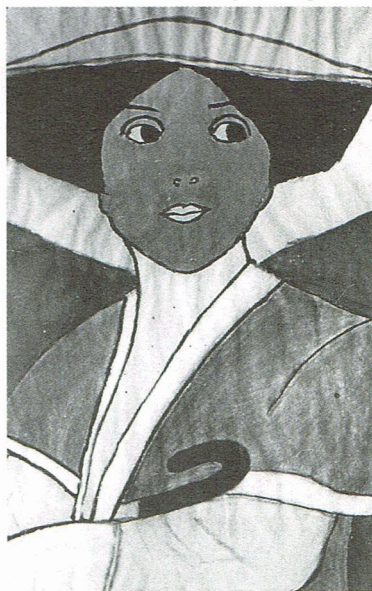


Marla Smalls

Hardy Lee Wise, *Musicisan*



Paul Small, *Lady in Big Hat*





Molly Bethel teaching kids painting class



Pre-school painting class



Joe Crawford



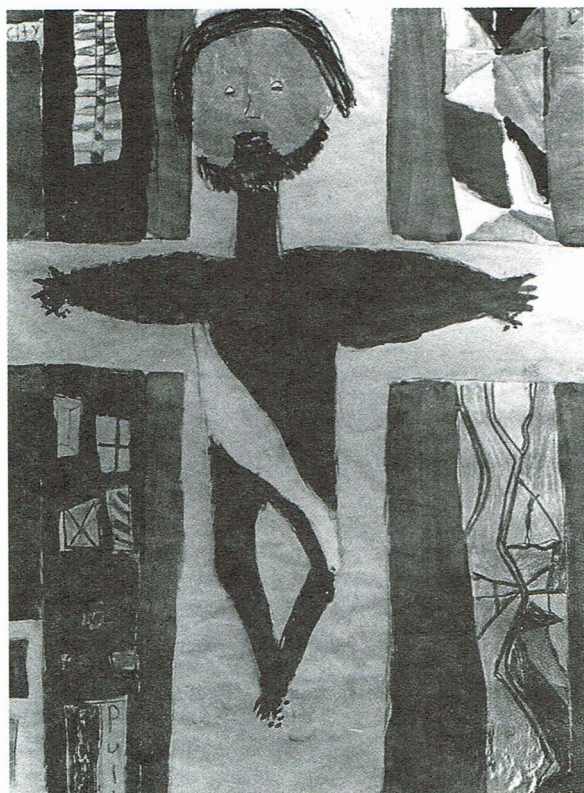
Olga Lownie teaching Teen/ Adult sculpture



Sue Reuss

Roberto Pacheco and student Beatrice Vandenburg





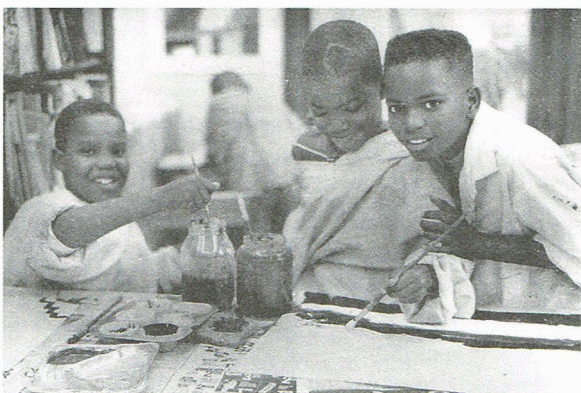
Corvette Johnson, *City Crucifixion*

Barbi Lare and Todrese Williams in Photo class





Kids Painting Class



Painting and Drawing Class

Meei Chang



FUNDING SUPPORT

Over the years since 1959, MollyOlga's program in visual art has been made possible in part with public funds from:

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Amherst Binding and Laminating Equipment

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Herbie Small and Porsche

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Wendell Riviera and Tierra Jazz

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All of these contributions are greatly appreciated.

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MollyOlga
Neighborhood Art Classes
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BRIDGETTE ROBINSON
"Birds on Rocks in the Rapids
Above Niagara Falls"
Pastel on paper 19" x 26"

