



MEMORIAL ART GALLERY RECEIVES PIECE OF ROCHESTER HISTORY Painting Celebrates 25 Years of Midtown Plaza



ROCHESTER, NY, June 17, 2008 — As the city of Rochester moves ahead with plans to raze Midtown Plaza, the property's former owner has donated a commemorative painting of the historic mall to the Memorial Art Gallery. Edith Lunt Small's *Midtown Plaza 1962–1987* is a virtual Who's Who of Rochester during the era. The 4-by 6-foot work, a gift of Midtown Rochester Properties, LLC, goes on public view on July 2.

"It is my pleasure to announce the donation of this artwork for display at the Memorial Art Gallery," says Lawrence J. Cohen, principal of Midtown Rochester Properties, LLC. "While Midtown Plaza soon will become a part of Rochester history, it's gratifying that important institutions such as the Gallery will permanently preserve recognizable pieces of Midtown, so that people can remember their experiences there, and future generations can learn what Midtown Plaza meant to this community."

"The Memorial Art Gallery values this historic and engaging artwork that adds a new dimension to its collection of images of Rochester," says director Grant Holcomb. "No visitor—young or old, Rochesterian or out-of-town visitor—will fail to be engaged by Edith Lunt Small's colorful and complex snapshot of a place that was, in its time, the commercial crossroads of our community. We are grateful to have been entrusted with this community treasure."

About the painting

Conceived by Rochester business leaders Maurice Forman and Gilbert J. C. McCurdy, Midtown Plaza opened to the public in 1962 as the nation's first downtown indoor mall. Architect Victor Gruen envisioned a "town square" filled with art and other amenities that would encourage commerce as well as collegiality among Rochester's citizens.

In 1987, on the occasion of Midtown's 25th anniversary, Edith Lunt Small was commissioned to create an artwork that would reflect the Plaza's vitality during its heyday. *Midtown Plaza 1962–1987* compresses 25 years of activities and events into a complex composition that includes everything from circus animals to Santa Claus. Rochester's signature image, Mercury, is framed in the skylight, and Midtown's own Clock of the Nations and Totem Pole stand tall in their original locations.

About the artist

Edith Lunt Small graduated in 1952 from the Applied Art program at Rochester Institute of Technology. "I studied perspective, design, painting, composition, lettering, religion, and philosophy,"

she says. “However, it was my affinity for comic books, medieval art, Japanese prints and ‘outsider art’ that helped me decide what artistic course to take.”

Since embarking on a career as an artist, Small has exhibited her paintings, sculpture, furniture, and mixed-media portraits throughout the region, at such institutions as Buffalo’s Burchfield-Penney Art Center and Rochester’s Oxford Gallery. Her work is represented in numerous private and public collections and has appeared in such national magazines as *Country Living*, *Southern Homes*, *Country Folk Art* and *The Artist’s Magazine*.

At the Memorial Art Gallery, her paintings were selected for seven Rochester-Finger Lakes Exhibitions from 1974 to 1999 and garnered two jurors’ awards.

By the 1980s Small’s work had become increasing three-dimensional, and she spent a year developing her woodworking skills with fellow artist and long-time friend Wendell Castle. “Edie is able to speak in the clear, uncluttered language of the folk artist,” says Castle, “yet this work has a personal vision which allows her to comment on her own history in ways that cut right to the heart of the matter.”

In recent years, Small has worked mainly on commission, creating detailed 3-D narratives. For each work, she uses photos of people, places and architecture and then spends three to six months building and painting the work.

In January and February 2008, she was the subject of a retrospective at NTID’s Dyer Arts Center.

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