

## *Florence Riefle Bahr*

For sixty-five years Florence E. Riefle Bahr has painted and sketched the world around her, capturing on the pages of her sketchbooks some of the most important events of our time. Working in a variety of media, she has captured the images of statesmen and neighborhood children as well as scenes that have changed the course of American history.

In the spring of 1931 Mrs. Bahr (then Miss Riefle) walked away from her graduation ceremonies at Maryland Institute College of Art with top honors and an arm full of roses. She grew up in Baltimore, the lone pictorial artist in a family of musicians. As her career began to take off, she married portraitist Leonard Bahr, her teacher at the Institute. Passionately in love with each other and their work, they devoted their time almost exclusively to their art. The newly-married Mrs. Bahr told a Sun reporter that she and her new husband would "rather paint than eat."

In 1935 Mrs. Bahr was invited to exhibit at the Baltimore Museum of Art. The following year the Maryland Institute hosted a joint show of works by the two Bahrs. Mrs. Bahr was accepted as a member of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors and one of her oil portraits, "Lily," was exhibited at the Association's annual show in New York. In 1937 Florence won the first of several awards for works exhibited at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

She returned to Maryland Institute in the 1960s to earn her MFA in painting. It was during this period that she became involved with the civil rights and anti-war movements. Mrs. Bahr helped out with breakfast programs for inner-city children run by the Black Panthers and by St. Ann's Church on Greenmount Avenue. At political rallies, community meetings and marches on Washington, she was there with her sketchbooks, dashing off drawings of the tumultuous events unfolding about her. She marched on the Pentagon, sketching the young protesters and documented the trial of the Catonsville Nine, making drawings of the participants and recording the comments of the observers in the court room. She was in Washington when Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his historic "I have a dream" speech. The Maryland State Archives in Annapolis holds a large collection of these remarkable sketchbooks.

The agony of the news of the violent death of Dr. King forced Mrs. Bahr back into her studio to create what is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable works of her career, the powerful *Homage to Dr. Martin Luther King*. "I heard the news on the radio," Mrs. Bahr recalled, "and I felt like the world was coming to an end. I went to my studio and poured my anguish and sorrow onto the canvas. *Homage* came straight out of my heart." Mrs. Bahr has presented this work to the NAACP (she worked with the NAACP in the 1960s and 1970s) in memory of Dr. King and in gratitude for the work of the NAACP.

# Florence Riefle Bahr

## *Education*

Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.,	1927-1928
Maryland Institute,	1928-1932 - Thomas G. Young Award
Maryland Institute, post-graduate,	1931-1932
Maryland Institute,	1962 BFA Painting
Maryland Institute,	1967 MFA Education - Printmaking
Catonsville Community College,	1959-1962

## *One Woman Shows*

Vagabond Theatre, Baltimore	1955
Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.	1958
Parish Hall Art Gallery, Baltimore	1964
McDonogh School, Cleveland	
Memorial Gallery, Baltimore	1968
Playhouse Theatre, Baltimore, Md.	1970
Fells Point Gallery, Baltimore	1974
Unicorn Gallery, Lutherville, Md.	1977
Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.	1981
Rockland Art Center, Ellicott City, Md.	1989

## *Group Shows*

Baltimore Museum of Art	
Peale Museum, Baltimore, Md.	
National Association of Women Painters & Sculptors, N.Y.	
Phoenix Gallery, Baltimore, Md.	
Loyola College, Baltimore, Md.	
Vertical Gallery, Baltimore, Md.	
Jewish Community Center, Baltimore, Md.	
Maryland Institute Alumni Association, Mount Royal School	
Artists for Peace, Howard County, Maryland	
Jonade Gallery, Baltimore	
Maryland Arts Council	
McDonogh School, Tuttle Gallery	
Department of Education, Howard County, Md.	
Pen Women, Washington and Baltimore	
Maryland Artists Today - 1968 State Tour	

## *Awards*

Baltimore Museum of Art {Print Club Purchase Prize 1936}

Baltimore Museum of Art - All Maryland Show, 1952

Maryland Institute Alumni Show, 1968

Loyola College - Baltimore Outdoor Show {1969 Purchase Prize}

Maryland Arts Council Selection, 2nd Annual Maryland Artists Today travelling show 1968

Maryland Institute Alumni Show {1968 F. Weber Award}

Constellation Art Contest {2nd Prize in watercolors} 1971

Paintings and prints are included in private collections in Baltimore, Pennsylvania, New York, Texas, Florida, and California and in Europe and Japan.