

N.A.W.A. in... ART TIMES

Culturally Speaking

By Cornelia Seckel



(L to R) Susan G. Hammond, Pat Adams, Susan Phillips, Sonia Stark at the Annual luncheon of the National Association of Women Artists

I have been an Honorary Vice President and just recently the National Association of Women Artists (www.thenawa.org) has just elected me as a member of their Board. After 27 years of publishing ART TIMES I surely have a broad vision of the arts in our region. In January of 1889, five innovative women, Grace Fitz-Randolph, Edith Mitchell Prellwitz, Adele Frances Bedell, Anita C Ashley, and Elizabeth S. Cheever, barred from full participation in the male-dominated National Academy of Design and The Society of American Artists, founded the Women's Art Club. The organization flourished and in 1913 was renamed the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, reflecting its national influence and the increasing number of women sculptors. Through the 1920s the organization was sponsoring exhibitions nationally and abroad. In the 1930s membership grew to over 1,000 and the organization opened its Argent Galleries on 57th Street in New York City. In 1941 the organization changed its name again to the National Association of Women Artists. Early exhibitions included works by the artists Rosa Bonheur, Mary Cassatt, Suzanne Valadon,

and Cecelia Beaux. Later, members included Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, Anna Hyatt Huntington, Louise Nevelson, Cleo Hartwig, Malvina Hoffman, Minna Citron, Alice Neel, Theresa Bernstein, Nell Blaine, and Dorothy Dehner. The NAWA archive contains a wealth of information about American Women artists through the ranks of its membership. The Annual luncheon/meeting was held at the National Arts Club, NYC. Pat Adams, painter, teacher and lecturer, was the featured speaker and an exhibition of her work was at the N.A.W.A. gallery at 80, Fifth Ave., NYC. I remember one particular comment she made during her talk: "Art lets us look into our own lives" and "Painting is the way to make sense of the world". Susan G. Hammond is the Executive Director and Sonia Stark is the new President. The mission has been and continues to be getting women artists visible to the art world. There are still many fewer women artists represented in galleries and in Museums. The luncheon was a chance for me to meet new artists, renew acquaintances and ultimately for me to support the organization.