

## My Involvement with Woman Made Gallery

I retired from my social work career around the year 2000. Having free time meant that I was free to visit galleries. I read about an exhibit at the Woman Made Gallery, 19th and Prairie. I had never heard of the gallery but was interested in learning what it was about. I had also begun painting found objects around the same time. I had no formal training in art but I considered this my retirement activity, and did not associate it with my visit to Woman Made.

The old mansion housing Woman Made was welcoming, but not as much as the women staffing it. I met Beate and Janet Bloch. The gallery had a gift shop and I bravely asked if my painted boxes might be appropriate items for the shop. Yes. I was off and running!



I started volunteering at the gallery. It became an important part of the next phase of my life. Here I was, in the company of artists who were generous and informative and inspiring. I began to think of myself as an artist.

I continued to spend time at Woman Made through its move to Bloomingdale Avenue on the north side, and then to Milwaukee Avenue in River North. Each space was made beautiful by Beate's vision and her/the gallery's inspiring and welcoming philosophy.

Beate invited me to have a solo show in 2007, which was something I never would have envisioned that day when I dropped in to see what Woman Made Gallery on Prairie Avenue was all about. I have not been physically involved with Woman Made recently, as my personal life has had demands taking priority. I look forward to the move to S. Halsted. Karen Rechtschaffen 8/29/23