

## WHO WE ARE HISTORY OF THE GIBBES WOMEN'S COUNCIL

The Gibbes Art Gallery Auxiliary, forerunner of the Gibbes Women's Council, was formed in 1950 at the request of the Carolina Art Association. It was the first auxiliary group at the Gibbes Museum, and it became the Women's Council of the Carolina Art Association in 1968. The group's members support the Gibbes by volunteering their time and talents to provide the financial support through membership and fundraising activities.

In 1970, the Council founded and staffed a museum store named the Turtle Shop after Anna Heyward Taylor's woodblock print, the Sea Turtle. The original mission for the store was the potential it offered for earned income due to the city's increased tourism. During a Gibbes 'Capital Campaign, the Women's Council raised over \$250,000 to secure the naming rights of the store, and it is now called the Gibbes Women's Council Museum Store. The shop employs a manager and assistants, and Women's Council members volunteer in the shop.

In 1971 the Hibernian Hall gala was the Council's first fundraiser. Since then, five galas were held at the Museum in the 1980s and various other fundraising activities have been developed by the members, including Christmas museum shop previews, lecture and film programs, antique and floral shows, and the Holiday House Tour in 1991.

The Art of Design (AOD) event, an elegant luncheon featuring a design-themed speaker, has now become GWC's primary fundraising affair. It still represents a significant commitment for the members in terms of planning and time, but its beginnings were much more labor intensive. The first AOD was chaired by Dolly Lipman, who later became GWC president. She recalled that Art of Design started as Fine Art and Flowers with Chris Gifstos, who was the former head of floral design for New York's Metropolitan Museum. He created floral designs as he spoke, which were then auctioned to attendees. Ticket sales had initially been slow but the event sold out and many committee members had to stand during the event so paying guests could be seated. There were very few sponsors and some food was donated because full catering was too costly. That event raised \$7,500. Today, AOD includes a party for sponsors on the evening prior to the luncheon; both events are fully catered. Since the completion of the Gibbes 'renovation in 2016, AOD has been held in the Lenhardt

Garden and has continued to be a sell-out event. The success of AOD credits GWC with raising nearly \$600,000 as of 2022, enabling the Gibbes to support art education programs, concert series and visiting artists.

The Gibbes Women's Council is a self-governing board. Its Board is elected for a two-year term. There are two general membership meetings per year, in the fall and spring. Events are scheduled during the year, often related to current exhibits at the Gibbes, and also include visits to other local art/design institutions, as well as field trips locally and out-of-charleston. The GWC celebrates the holiday season and ends the year with an annual picnic.

The year 2019–2020 marked the 70th anniversary of the Women's Council and the 10th anniversary of Art of Design. AOD 2020 raised more money than in the past nine years, engaged more GWC members as sponsors, and also enjoyed more corporate sponsors than in the past nine years. AOD is a proven, resounding success!!

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*Updated for the year 2023-2024*