

Peggy deSalle (1904 - 1985)



Peggy deSalle was born Marguerite Fox in Snok, Hungary. She emigrated to the U.S. with her family in 1910 when she was six years old. As a young woman, she trained as an art photographer and worked for the art conservator at the Detroit Institute of Arts.



Peggy deSalle, 1980 (Detroit Free Press)

In 1929, she married Zoltan Sepeshy, a Hungarian painter who would later become president of Cranbrook Academy of Art. The marriage was brief; in 1933, Peggy married Albert deSalle, who was her lifelong partner in championing the arts.

In a later interview, Peggy talked about her first experience selling fine art. Refugees fleeing Europe in the 1940s needed someone they could trust to sell their family heirlooms. Peggy held an exhibition and sale at her home in Detroit, dubbed “Peggy deSalle’s Gallery.”



The Little Gallery in Birmingham

In 1942, Peggy and Albert moved to Birmingham, and in 1950, she opened the Little Gallery at 915 E. Maple. It was the first art gallery in the Detroit area. Peggy called herself the ‘grandmother to the whole cause of contemporary art,’ and tirelessly promoted young artists, giving them an opportunity to “take flight and go elsewhere” once they were established.

Why I was inspired: Whether she was aiding refugees or giving struggling artists a place to launch their careers, Peggy deSalle exhibited a passion for helping others through art.

--Submitted by Lori Eaton